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THE COURSE OF FAITH.

T H E

COURSE OF FAITH,

PRACTICAL BELIEVER DELINEATED.

JOHN ANGELL JAMES.

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P R E F A C E .

THE substance of the following little treatise was given to my congregation some few years since, in a course of week-day sermons. It occurred to me at the time that peradventure what had instructed my own flock might be of some small service to others ; but for some reason or other the matter was laid aside. The intention then conceived is now fulfilled, though amidst innumerable occupations, and some painful circumstances in my relative circle.

My mind was led to this subject, and has been sometimes helped in passing through it, by a similar course of sermons, contained in the works of Dr. Manton, that very celebrated homiletical divine among our great ancestors, the Nonconformist ministers ejected from the Established Church in 1662. No one will dispute the title I have justly applied to *him*, who is informed that he published five bulky folio volumes of pulpit discourses ; one of which contained a series of sermons on the hundred and nineteenth Psalm. One is ready to ask, where did the writers of those days find readers of their ponderous tomes of theology ? We answer, among all the professors of spiritual religion, who had both more love for the subject, and

more leisure to study it, than we of this age, and who had scarcely any other books to read.

With a deep conviction and a due sense of the extreme prolixity, scholasticism, bad taste, and verbosity— not to speak of occasional mysticism, distorted evangelism, and somewhat spurious theopathy—of most of the writers of that celebrated school, I confess to a strong partiality for them. We have no occasion, I am convinced, to be ashamed of our ancestors. In surveying their works, we feel something like the descendants of some noble families, when they bring out from their wardrobes and museums the rich dresses and antique furniture of their forefathers, who may smile at many things that now appear grotesque, but which still are valuable in themselves, and proofs of affluence, and exhibitions of former wealth and grandeur. The sound, rich theology of the first Nonconformists, when modified by the aids of modern exegesis—their deep devotion—their extensive knowledge of the great text book of all preachers—their constant aim to improve the heart, to guide the conscience, and to sanctify the life—in short, their thorough understanding of what is the true object of the Christian preacher, and their undiverted endeavour to accomplish it, render their works worthy to be held in everlasting remembrance: and which when read and studied with all the corrective advantages of modern criticism, cannot fail to benefit those who will hold converse with them. Who in a right frame of mind can read Owen, notwithstanding his antiquated style, his obscure scholasticism, and extreme wordiness—or the fervent Baxter; or the

sublime Howe ; or, passing from the Nonconformists to Episcopal writers, the copious Barrow, the meditative Hall, and above the rest, the sweet and unctuous Leighton, whose every page is redolent with the odour of that Name which is above every name—without profit? No; we cannot spare the works of these men. Nor ought they to be retained upon our shelves for show, but not for use, like pieces of old armour on the walls of a museum, which have had their use, and are only retained as memorials of the past. If the light and accuracy of modern criticism and philosophy shall do nothing more than rub off the rust that time has deposited upon these sacred weapons, and adapt them more perfectly to the tactics of modern warfare, it will perform a valuable service; but to abandon them altogether for other instruments, of entirely new construction, and even of new material, will be to exchange the theology of the Bible for a dubious philosophy, and to throw away “the armour of God,” for a human invented panoply. Men that studied their Bibles, either by the light of the martyr’s taper, or amidst the gloom of a dungeon, might be supposed, if the secret of the Lord be with them that fear him, to have known much of the mind of the Spirit.

The following treatise is a humble effort to follow, with unequal steps, I admit, the example of these great men in the selection of their topics, and their mode of treating them. But between my book and Manton’s there is as much difference in value as there is in bulk. Yet some will read mine who will never see his.

The design of this work is to aid the Christian in the practice of theology, rather than the divine in the study of it. I write for the disciple, not for the teacher. To awaken the sinner, guide the inquirer, and aid the believer in the path of life--rather than to lead the student through the intricate labyrinths of controversy or into the depths of profound Biblical knowledge--is the highest object which my literary ambition has ever led me to seek, or my own consciousness will ever lead me to hope that I can obtain.

In this work I have selected what none will deny is the great principle of the spiritual life, of the Christian character, and of holy conduct. *There is such a thing as the spiritual LIFE.* Religion is nothing apart from it. Without this, however correct may be its outward form and expression, it is a picture or a statue; it may be a beautiful one, but it is dead. Faith is the expression of this life, or rather it is the principle of life itself which developes in all other expressions of it. The spiritual life is subject of course to all the varieties which mark the course of our physical vitality: and hence the reality of what is called experimental religion or religious experience. There is perhaps no subject less understood or more abused than this. Man is a being possessed of the various faculties of intellect, will, passions, and conscience. Religion is designed to influence all these, for it takes the whole soul under its guidance, influence, and impulsion. It gives light to the intellect, determination to the will, emotion to the heart, tenderness to the conscience, and purity to the imagination; and brings out

the effect of this joint operation of the soul in all the beauties of a holy life. It falls from heaven upon the whole soul like the solar ray upon the prism, which divides and distributes the distinct and separate colours over the whole glassy substance. But men are apt to distort this beautiful consummation, and represent religion too much as consisting only, or in the predominance, of one colour.

There have been, so to speak, different schools, distinguished by the predominance they give in their representations of the influence of religion over one or other of the faculties of the soul. Some, like Sandeman, or Walker of Dublin, have resolved it into the intellect, and made true personal piety to consist of correct knowledge, almost to the exclusion of the affections; and have presented religion in the form of an icicle—clear, but cold. Others, like Mr. Finney, have made it to consist almost exclusively of the determination of the will: this is to render it like a sceptre of iron—stern, inflexible, and powerful; but still hard, cold, and unfeeling. Others, like Madame Guion, Thomas a Kempis, and perhaps some of the modern Methodists, give too great a prominence in experimental religion to the emotions: this is to exhibit religion as the morbid excitement and variations produced by stimulants, rather than the sober feelings and steady continuous action of health. Others again, such as Papists, Puseyites, and many of a better school, resolve nearly the whole of experimental religion into the imagination, and make it consist of the soul's intercourse, through

this faculty, aided by the senses, with persons, places, and events of deep historic interest: this is to make it consist of a species of poesy, which delights the subject of it with its pathetic and beautiful mental pictures, pleasing associations, and brilliant images, while perhaps the intellect is uninformed, the will unsubdued, and the conscience unenlightened.

It is very clear to some observant minds, that there is in this age a species of religious writing emanating from the evangelical school of divinity, and included in its experimental department, which partakes far too much of the soft, the pensive, the plaintive, the sentimental, to constitute a robust and healthful piety, and which is the more seductive on account of its seeming deep-toned spirituality. There is unquestionably considerable mental luxury in those hours and frames of meditative stillness and tender emotion, which are indulged and enjoyed when such works are perused, in which all that is spiritually pathetic appeals to all that is susceptible in our nature, and the sweet cordials of luscious consolation are administered by the hand of gentleness, from the tasteful cup of elegant and touching composition. And such reading no doubt tends to foster the æsthetical part of religion. Yet is it a question whether this kind of works does not substitute for a healthy personal religion, a vague emotional mysticism—a weak solution of religious feeling and poetic sentiment; whether it does not enervate the soul and render it less athletic in mortifying corruption—less disposed to cherish and exercise a self-denying and warm-hearted philanthropy,

and more inclined to indulge the tastes of the religious recluse, than of the evangelist and the reformer of this dark, wicked, and wretched world.

There is also another series of once popular and widely circulated devotional and theological works, but now forgotten, or nearly so, amidst the multitude of more modern ones that have superseded them in public favour, to which I would for a moment allude, especially as bearing a resemblance in name to this treatise, I mean Romaine's "Life," "Walk," and "Triumph of Faith." Of these works it may be said, they are each the reproduction of the other, and all three are books of one idea—but that one how great and glorious—"CHRIST IS ALL:" or put in another form, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." With what delight the intelligent and devout believer, whose creed and whose heart are replete with *Christology*, may and must read these works, I need not say; but he must be an *intelligent* and *devout* believer to do so. He must be like their author, so entirely in the holy spell and fascination of the cross of Christ, as to be able to look at nothing else. This *was* the case with Romaine: he so constantly walked and basked in the noontide glory of the Sun of Righteousness, that he had eyes for no other object. He was so engrossed with the great orb of gospel light, that he saw not even the wide and glowing landscape of beauty which that Sun revealed and illuminated. *His* faith was only or chiefly faith in Christ for *justification*. He shut up his readers to faith, and shut up that faith to Christ. It was a noble seclusion I admit, and yet it may be doubted

whether it was a scriptural one. Christ is the centre of the Christian scheme, but there is also a circumference : and a true faith, while it begins at the centre, does not stop there, but radiates through all the intermediate spaces to the outer circle. Romaine's works, spiritual, evangelical, and experimental as they are, must be considered by every judicious mind as defective,—they are not a fair impress of the New Testament as a whole : there is, if not too much of Paul, too little of James ; if not too much of the epistle to the Galatians, too little of the Sermon upon the Mount. Or to give another illustration, he dwelt almost exclusively on the justifying faith of the epistle to the Romans, without taking up either the justifying works of the epistle of James, or the general faith of the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. What was the consequence ? Just what might have been expected : he prepared the way for theoretic Antinomianism, and many of his hearers when he died became the admirers and followers of that notorious personification of spiritual pride, presumption, and arrogance, William Huntington. For what is Antinomianism ? The gospel abstracted from the law and resting upon a basis of sovereign mercy, instead of being founded upon the principles of moral government—a scheme intended to subvert the law, while mercy is exercised towards its offenders. A true faith therefore, must be exercised as much towards all the duties of the law as towards all the blessings of the gospel.

It has been my object in the present volume to combine, as far as I could, the theoretical, practical, and experi-

mental, in the representation of personal religion. In true godliness, there must be some great truths received in the exercise of intelligent faith: these must be felt in their influences upon the affections, and carried out in practical and visible operation in the life. We cannot conceive of a true religion which does not affect the whole man; nor can we conceive of a true revelation which is not adapted to produce such a religion. Now it is the glory of Christianity that it does this. It addresses itself to all our faculties; it meets us in all our changeful circumstances; and is adapted to all our conditions of existence. If this *be* so, then a true faith must be that which, as a principle of action, is as extensive as the details of the Bible, or as the varieties of our situation and experience. There is no exercise of true religion with which faith has nothing to do. No religious duty can be performed, whether relating to God the Father or Christ; to Providence or grace; to God or to man; to justification, sanctification, or consolation; to prosperity or adversity; to life, death, or eternity; which does not involve the exercise of faith. In the Christian life, it is the vital blood which, gushing from the renewed heart, flows through the whole frame of godliness, carrying warmth, health, and strength to its minutest parts, and to its very extremities. Where this comes not, there is coldness and death. This constitutes the pulse of the soul, which indicates, as it beats feebly or vigorously, the state of the soul's health, and its degree of vigour and vitality.

It is therefore quite apparent that I have not too much

widened the sphere of faith in giving it the varied application set forth in this volume. Too many, like Romaine, have opened for it only one channel to flow in, and that is justification. If too much prominence has not been given to doctrinal instruction, too little has been devoted to that which is practical. It is not knowledge, so much as *love*, which constitutes the Christian—the love which is the working of faith. Few can make high attainments in knowledge, but all may grow illimitably in the exercise of the holy, submissive, and kindly feelings. There is nothing now so much needed by and for Christianity, as an earnest exemplification of Christ's own teachings in his Sermon upon the Mount, founded on the apostle's doctrine of justification by faith. This, exhibited by the church in the sight of all the world, would establish the law by faith; would preach louder than a thousand voices; would be more eloquent than ten thousand volumes; would carry to the minds of many a deeper conviction than the most conclusive logic; and do more to recommend the system of orthodox doctrine than the most powerful and attractive rhetoric. Let those who would see the error of many false systems of religion, and see the nature of the true one, ponder deeply the apostle's saying, "*In Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircum-* but FAITH WHICH WORKETH BY LOVE."

J. A. J.

CHAPTER I.

FAITH IN GENERAL.

It must be obvious to all persons who reflect, that there are three perfectly distinct yet harmonious guides of human conduct—the senses, reason, and faith. The first direct us in regard to those objects which appeal directly to our bodily organs. The second is our rule in all matters connected with our varied occupations, tastes, pursuits and duties in this life. The third is the ground of action in reference to religion and the life to come. These are different in their nature and objects, but they are not incongruous. Reason is not opposed to sense, for it is in part founded upon it; nor is faith antagonistic to reason, but altogether consonant with it. The life of sense is coincident with that of reason, and the life of reason with that of faith. Sense supplies materials for the work of reason, and reason guides and controls the exercise of sense. So reason assists faith, and faith sustains and elevates reason. They are each a step higher, and a step beyond the other. Reason is an advance upon sense, the latter being the guide of brutes, the former the chief guide, in matters pertaining to this world, of men: and faith is an advance upon reason, being the guide of men viewed as immortal. Of sense and reason it may to a considerable extent be said, they are of the earth, earthy; while of faith it may be affirmed it is of heaven, and

therefore heavenly. The man is above the beast by reason : and the Christian is above the man by faith.

Faith then is our great principle and guide in matters of religion, and must of necessity be so, seeing religion has to do with matters of which we can *know* nothing but by revelation.

FAITH stands out in the Word of God with a prominence and boldness of relief that must attract every eye. We could as readily look up to the cloudless heavens at noon-day and not see the sun, as open the page of the New Testament and not meet with this ubiquitous term. "He that cometh to God must *believe* that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him." "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish but have everlasting life." "He that *believeth* on him is not condemned, but he that *believeth* not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." "By *faith* we stand." "We walk by *faith*." "Add to your *faith* virtue, and to virtue knowledge." "We are justified by faith,"—"purifying our hearts by faith,"—"overcoming the world by faith." But it were to quote a large part of the New Testament to cite all the passages in which this word occurs. It is, so far as the duty and privilege of man are concerned, the great central term, around which all our other duties and privileges revolve, which keeps them in their proper station, and imparts to them their radiance, life, and vigour. We know nothing of the economy under which we are placed, and are altogether ignorant of the genius of Christianity, if we are not intimately acquainted with the

nature, the province, and the importance of this grace. We shall stumble at every step, and can neither properly perform our duties, nor adequately enjoy our privileges, if we are ignorant of this. In all systems, whether theoretical or practical, there is generally some one principle which is the key to open all the rest. It is so here, and faith is the key of Christianity. If ignorant of this, we shall blend in confusion the systems of law and gospel, knowing neither how they differ nor how they are to be harmonized. Surely then it well becomes us at all times, and especially in times like these, when the whole system of faith is attacked, not only by Popery—which is its direct and we might almost say avowed antagonist—but by a formalism, which though it refuses to be called by the *name* of Popery, is in fact little else than its very soul.

It is of immense importance to a right knowledge of genuine Christianity and its counterfeits, to look steadily at this one very simple and obvious fact just stated—the *prominence given on the page of Scripture to that one word “faith:”* and it is of no less consequence in detecting, on a broad scale, the errors of many systems of false doctrine, to observe how small a place this word occupies in them, and how it is shuffled out by their authors. This glorious term is so characteristic of our holy religion, as we find it in its own records, that by a figure of speech the act of believing is put for the object, and both in Scripture language and in ordinary discourse, the whole system of Christianity is called “THE FAITH.” “Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.”

Let us then very closely observe our situation. We walk by faith. The objects of our religious contemplation are all matters of mere testimony—we receive them

upon authority. They are things *unseen*. Though realities, they are invisibles. In following them, we abandon the guidance of our senses, and push into regions where even our reason also, though it accompany us, cannot precede us. Every step is, so far as sense is concerned, amidst thick darkness and awful silence. Our usual guides have left us; and we adventure forward with only the lamp of revelation in our hand. Neither God, nor Christ, nor heaven, nor hell, which are the great objects of faith, is seen or heard. We take all upon trust. In some respects Christianity is more entirely a life and walk of faith than Judaism, which to a considerable extent was a religion of sense. True it is, the Jew was required in the rites and ceremonies of the Levitical law to recognise the types and shadows of greater and better blessings to come, which was itself an act of faith. And there were also the promises of the Messiah delivered out from age to age by the prophets, the truth of which could be received, and the reflections which they excited could be indulged, only by an act of belief. Nor had the pious Israelite any other way of coming at the knowledge of a future state of happiness beyond the grave than we possess. So that there was ample room even then for faith. He had the Word of God containing the records of the past and the predictions of the future, which to him would become realities only by a true belief: and through all the varying circumstances of his individual and national history he was called upon to exercise confidence in God. Still to him there was much that was palpable and visible ever appealing to his senses; and therefore to a considerable extent he walked by sight. Thus before him was at one time the tabernacle of witness—the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night: there stood the temple with all its visible rites and ceremonies—

its priests and sacrifices, its altar and heaven-kindled fire, its ark of the covenant, its cherubim of glory, and its awful shechinah. Signs from heaven were perpetually present to his senses, and he could speak of what he had seen and heard. These things were the helps of the church's piety while yet it was in the infancy and feebleness of its existence, and when its confidence needed such props. It was a mixed condition of faith and sight which was never intended to be perpetual, but to be withdrawn when the church, under the dispensation of Christ and of the Spirit, had arrived at adult age. Some faint traces of this are even now remaining in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. In these the outward symbols appeal to our senses, but the spiritual meaning to our minds. With these small exceptions, ours is a system of unmixed faith. We have the Word of God, and nothing else, to be our guide through this wilderness to our heavenly Canaan. Mr. Conder's beautiful hymn, in which he contrasts the Jewish and Christian dispensations, sets this forth in a very impressive manner.

- " O God, who didst thy will unfold
In wondrous modes to saints of old,
By dream, by oracle, or seer !
Wilt Thou not still Thy people hear ?
- " What though no answering voice is heard ;
Thine oracles, the written word,
Counsel and guidance still impart,
Responsive to the upright heart.
- " What though no more by dreams is shown,
That future things to God are known ;
Enough the promises reveal :
Wisdom and love the rest conceal.
- " Faith asks no signal from the skies,
To show that prayers accepted rise :
Our priest is in the holy place,
And answers from the throne of grace.

"No need of prophets to enquire :
The sun is risen ; the stars retire.
The Comforter is come, and sheds
His holy unction on our heads.

"Lord ! with this grace our hearts inspire ;
Answer our sacrifice by fire ;
And by Thy mighty acts declare,
Thou art the God who heareth prayer."

To walk by faith, then, is characteristic of a higher and more matured state of the church of God ; as being the strongest exercise of confidence in God. Hence, perhaps, we may derive an argument against the personal and visible reign of Christ, as held by the pre-millenarians. The New Testament speaks of the christian life as a life of faith, and that in a manner which would lead us to conclude that it was to remain such till the church militant becomes in heaven the church triumphant. But if Christ is to come and reign visibly, faith ceases, and the church in that case would walk by sight : and thus there seems a retrogression to Judaism.

Unbelief frets, murmurs, and cavils at this Divine arrangement, and asks whether it is not dealing hardly with man, that his eternal destiny should turn on such a hinge—that his probation for immortality should be passed amidst such shades ; that everlasting torment or misery should hang upon his belief or unbelief, of matters from which his senses, his usual guides in other matters affecting his interests, are excluded ; so that his weal or woe for everlasting ages should depend upon faith ? And even they who go not so far as to cavil at the arrangement, sometimes think it strange, and are ready to wish for the testimony of sense : "O, could we but *see* God and Christ, and heaven and hell, and thus *know* upon the evidence of sense, the truth and reality of these stupendous objects, instead of *believing* them by a revelation, would it not be

helpful to our piety, and be a more solid basis of conviction?" Such *is*, perhaps, sometimes the aspiration of a feeble and ill-established, though pious mind.

In giving an answer to this cavil and this complaint, let us look from religion to the secular matters of this world, and see if there be not a perfect harmony between the arrangements of Providence with regard to things unseen and eternal, and the constitution of society with regard to the things that are seen and temporal. Are not the latter founded and directed, at least to a very considerable extent, upon the same principle as the former? What do we know of past history but by faith in human testimony; or what but by the same medium do we know of any other country but our own? How much of all the information we possess on every subject of human knowledge do we not derive from this source? Is not belief in testimony an instinctive principle of our nature, as evinced by the first buddings of reason in children, than whom, none more implicitly confide in the assurances of others, and whose propensity to belief is a credulity which nothing but experience corrects? Is not the whole system of trade to a considerable extent founded upon credit; and what is credit but belief in human testimony? Is not a large part of our daily and ordinary intercourse with our fellow-creatures, and our usual course of action, regulated by faith? Where then is the anomaly, or where the hardship, of our being called to act in the higher matters of religion upon the self-same principle which guides us in our lower ones? It might, on the contrary, appear as if our practice in the lower department of action were only fitting and helping us to carry out the same principle in the higher one.

Besides, it is impossible it should be otherwise than it

is. The objects of religion are in their very nature invisible, inaudible, and impalpable. It is their excellence and their glory not to belong to the objects of sense, nor to find a local habitation within their sphere. None can see God in his essence: and though we can conceive of the visibility of Christ, yet as his nature is now, our organ of vision might be too feeble to bear the blaze of his glory, or with all its exquisite contrivance, too rudely constructed to take in the stupendous object. Heaven and hell are the regions of spirits: and can a fleshly eye see *minds*?

Let it be recollected that we are now in a state of probation and discipline for eternity, and what so suitable to such a condition, which necessarily involves something of self-denial, dependence, and submission to the will of God, as being placed in a state where the hinge of our trial shall be our simple trust in the Word of God? This was in part the nature of man's trial in Paradise: there grew the blushing fruit appealing to his senses, and seemingly inviting his touch and taste: but there, on the other hand, was the Word of God appealing to his faith, threatening him with death if he presumed to eat, accompanied, in the tree of life, with the implied promise of immortality, if he abstained. He had nothing but the Word of God for either, and his trial was one of faith. Can we conceive of anything more suitable as a test of character and conduct, than submission to the will, and trust in the Word of God our Creator, when, as in this case, both are accredited with sufficient evidence not only to warrant belief, but to render unbelief inexcusable?

If our probation is to be carried on in the present world—and in what other world can it be carried on—then must it be in perfect harmony and keeping with all the arrangements and relations of an earthly state. The objects

of religion and of secular pursuits must not interfere with each other: they must have no such separate departments or spheres, as to clash with each other. But how could they be secured in any other way, and upon any other scheme, than by making the one the object of belief and the other the object of sense? By placing the former behind a veil, where they shall be sufficiently recognised by the eye of faith to have their proper influence upon all our moral conduct, without being so clearly seen by the eye of sense as to overpower by their grandeur and magnificence, our attention to the things of the present world.

Moreover, might we not here bring forward with advantage the testimony of Christ to prove how little advantage would be gained by any other system than that under which we are placed? In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, our Lord represents the former as entreating that Lazarus might be sent as a messenger from the dead to his brethren to persuade them to repent and escape the torments of hell. To this request Abraham replies, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them: if they hear not them, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."—Luke xvi, 29. From this declaration it is plain that our Lord must and could mean nothing else, than that they who will not take up religion upon a principle of faith, would not do it upon the testimony of sense. Let it be supposed that another system had been adopted, and that any man who is not satisfied with the present constitution of things should have some palpable or visible manifestation made to his senses of divine and eternal realities, as far as this could be done; is it certain he would be more determined and influenced by it than by the testimony of faith? If this were granted only to *him*, he would then suspect it a mere dream, or the vision

of a perturbed imagination, or an illusion of the senses ; for how could he suppose that he should be so favoured as to be singled out from the multitude for such a special revelation. If on the other hand, the visible manifestation were perpetual and universal, which all men had in common, and had constantly before them, how soon would they grow awfully and carelessly familiar with the heavenly vision, and no more regard it than did the Israelites the pillar of cloud and fire, those constant and visible tokens of the Divine presence ; or the dreadful scenes of Mount Sinai, when they made a calf and worshipped it, at the base of the cloud-capped and trembling mountain. Indeed the whole ancient history of the Jews is an actual demonstration of the fact, that a system of religious teaching which appeals by visible objects to the senses, rather than to belief through the medium of testimony, has no great advantage for moral efficiency, and that to walk by sight is no more likely to ensure a due regard to the will of God, than walking by faith.

A reflecting and candid mind will therefore perceive that nothing can be more suitable either to man's nature or condition as a test of character, a rule of conduct, and a ground of obedience, than a revelation of the divine will addressed to his belief, and sufficiently accredited to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that it *is* an expression of the will of God.

Here, then, is our condition, and it is an impressive and important one. God, in the exuberance of his mercy, has determined upon the salvation of our lost and ruined world. In the exercise of infallible and irresponsible sovereignty, and for reasons of which he giveth no account to any one, he has passed by fallen angels, who are left to suffer the just punishment of their sins, and has resolved

upon the redemption of fallen man, by the incarnation and vicarious death of his only begotten, well-beloved Son. All that stands connected with the contrivance, the revelation, and execution of the stupendous scheme of mercy, from the beginning of time, is committed to imperishable record in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. These are the revelations of his work of mercy, and of what he requires of us in order to our availing ourselves of the provisions of his grace, and to our being saved with an eternal salvation. We walk, therefore, not by sight, but by faith in the book of God : we do not, cannot, see the objects of our pious regard, but they are here set forth upon the testimony of God himself ; and our personal religion, our *whole* religion, in fact, consists in our believing this book, and acting accordingly.

That mysterious, wonderful, imperishable, volume, written by holy men of old as they were moved and guided by the Holy Ghost, contains all we know or can know, for certain, about God, Christ, immortality, heaven, or hell. There it stands apart and alone, testifying of these high matters to the children of men, and calling upon them so to believe its facts, doctrines, promises, precepts, and threatenings, as under the power of this faith, through the Divine Spirit which wrote the volume and gives the disposition cordially to receive it, as to fashion their whole inner man and outer self by its contents.

But it is necessary that we now consider the nature of that principle in the exercise of which this divine book is received. It might have been supposed that so simple a subject as *faith* would have been sufficiently understood to need no explanation ; and that a consentaneousness of opinion would have left no room for controversy : but it is not so. Even this has been beclouded and made the matter of disputation.

The sacred writers rarely descend to definitions: their language is generally used, with occasional variations, in the sense attached to their terminology in ordinary discourse: and it is sufficiently accurate to be intelligible, without being elaborately precise. We meet however with one, and but one definition, if indeed it may be so called, of faith. This occurs in the opening of the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" We may just stop to remark, that it is evident from the context, that the apostle is here defining faith, not as the principle of the sinner's justification, but in its most comprehensive sense, as embracing the whole revealed will of God on all topics: and as that principle by which the saint lives, and which is called into exercise by all the ever-varying circumstances in which he is placed. That it is employed in this general and comprehensive sense in the passage before us, and not in its specific application to the great business of justification, is evident from the instances of its operation set forth by the apostle. It will however be found that this, its generic meaning, will apply also to all its specific varieties: and that the faith which justifies the sinner, and that which sanctifies the believer, is identical in its nature, though various in its relations, and somewhat diverse in its operations. The word rendered *substance* in the first clause of this definition occurs but five times in the New Testament. In three of which it is translated *confidence*.—2 Cor. ix, 4; xi, 17; Heb. iii, 14. And in the opinion of the most eminent critics, this is the meaning of the word in the apostle's definition. Some consider him as intending to convey the idea of such an exercise of mind towards "the things hoped for," as gives a kind of present subsistence of them. That he designed

to say, faith makes us feel their reality, and to act under their influence, as if we *saw* them to be true; but does not *confidence* accomplish this? A man *fully* confident, actuated by a plenary persuasion, does seem to have a sense of present reality and existence. So that nothing appears to come nearer to the apostle's meaning, than the word confidence. So understood, what then does he say, "Faith is the confident expectation of the things which are hoped for." The true and essential nature of faith therefore, in all its applications and uses, whether general, as in this chapter, or special, in reference to Christ and the justification of the soul, is "confidence."

In the next clause he says, "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." This word occurs but in one other place in the New Testament, and that is 2 Timothy iii, 16, where it is rendered "reproof," but without any necessity, as the word is profitable for *conviction*. The verb which answers to the noun is commonly translated, *to convince*, as in John viii, 9; Acts xviii, 28; 1 Cor. xiv, 24; and other places. *Conviction* therefore seems to be the idea the apostle intended to convey here. Now it must strike every reader that in strict propriety faith cannot of itself be the proof of the things believed. A man's faith in any testimony, however strong his belief may be, cannot be the evidence that the testimony is true. The word "evidence," then, must be here used to mean that conviction which is produced by evidence—the cause being put for the effect. Inverting the order of the two expressions, and placing them in their logical sequence, and paraphrasing the language, the apostle says, "Faith is the conviction of the truth of those promises of unseen blessings which God has made, and a confident expectation of them on the ground of this conviction of their truth."

What then does this amount to, but that faith is a real confidence in God? It is confidence in God—confidence that something reported to us in his Word is true—confidence in his veracity that he *will* perform what he has said—confidence in his power that he *can* perform it. This necessarily involves the idea of *expectation*, since it is absolutely impossible to confide in his truthfulness and ability to perform something he has said, without expecting it. Now if this be true faith, whether general or saving, it must ultimately relate to God himself personally. It has two objects—one proximate, which is the Word; the other remote, which is God himself: or to speak perhaps more correctly, God is the object of our confidence, and the Word is the medium of it.

From hence it appears evident also that faith must include in it something more than a mere intellectual assent. It is not a report in which we have no interest that we believe; against which there can be no prejudice; and for which there can be no prepossession: but it is a testimony to us of good things, which must suppose, in the very act of believing them, some exercise of both the will and the heart. If a fellow-creature on whom I am dependent make me a promise, or denounce against me a threatening—and God's testimony comes to us in this shape—I voluntarily and fully place my confidence in him for the fulfilment of his word, that is, if I believe him able and truthful to do as he has said: and that confidence in him *personally*, is my faith in him, and not merely my intellectual persuasion that he has spoken or written the promise. The proximate object of faith I know, as I have already said, is the Scripture, which is God's testimony; but its *ultimate* object is God himself, who bears the testimony: so that, while by my understanding I believe in the

truth of the testimony as God's, I at the same time with my will and heart confide in God himself for the fulfilment of the testimony. It is not merely the truth *of* the testimony that I believe, or in other words that the thing is spoken by God, but the truth *in* the testimony, or belief *in* that very thing which is there promised. A man writes me a letter promising me many good things ; I know his handwriting, and I believe it to be his autograph—so far, I believe with my understanding in the truth of the letter ; but at the same time I know his wealth and veracity, and that he will perform all he has said : here is my confidence or faith in him, and that confidence implies an exercise of my will and heart.

To exclude the will from faith is to deprive it of all moral character whatever : mere intellectual apprehension can have no moral quality, even though the object of it be a religious one. Let faith be once reduced to a mere intellectual notion, a simple perception of evidence, a passive surrender of the understanding to the power of proof, and we at once destroy the responsibility of man for his belief ; for who is answerable for that in which neither the will nor the heart has any share ? And if there be no moral excellence in faith—and there can be none, if it is a purely intellectual exercise—so neither can there be any exercise of the will, and of course no criminality in unbelief, this being the opposite of faith. We return again then to our view of faith—that it is in all cases a practical confidence in God.

It needs scarcely be remarked, that faith is confined to no one dispensation of grace ; it was called for in this general view of it as truly under the Jewish as under the Christian dispensation, and indeed the triumphs of it displayed in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, are all collected from

the patriarchal ages and the times of the Levitical economy. Moreover Abraham is the father of the faithful, and so called, not because he was the first, but the most eminent believer. Yet it can scarcely fail to strike an attentive reader of the Old Testament, how little is said about faith in that portion of Holy Scripture. Not that the thing itself is not there, but it is expressed by another term—the *trust* of the Old Testament is the faith of the New. Faith is confidence, and so is trust. This furnishes another proof, if another were wanting, that it is not a merely intellectual act.

Faith has relation to *all* the revealed will of God, as the different parts of it come successively under our attention. These are very various, some are in the form of promise—others of invitation—others of precept—and others again, of threatening. The law is as much a part of God's revealed will as the gospel, and must as truly be believed. Hell is as certainly threatened to the impenitent sinner as heaven is promised to the penitent believer: and therefore he who trembles and obeys, is as truly living in the exercise of faith, as he who hopes and rejoices. In some of the instances of faith mentioned in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, we see its operation in reference to a threatening, as in the case of Noah and Rahab. It is true that even in these cases there was a promise to be hoped for, as well as a threatening to be dreaded. But both were believed. If this part of the object of faith is not comprehended among the confident expectations of things hoped for, it is among the full persuasion of things not seen. Every effort after holiness, every labour after mortification, every resistance of temptation, carried on under the persuasion that God has enjoined these things, is founded on the belief of God's testimony, and therefore implies an act of belief.

Such a state of mind cannot be referred to any lower source than a divine and heavenly one: it is in every case the work of the Holy Spirit. Though this is clear from many parts of the Word of God, as well as deducible from the general principle that all spiritual good is from God, it is sometimes sustained by two passages of Scripture, which have no reference to it. The first is what the apostle says in the second chapter of the *Ephesians* and the eighth verse, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God.*" By the gift, we are not to understand faith, but salvation; as is evident from the next words, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." The subject of this ninth verse is evidently the same as that of the eighth, and refers to the gift spoken of, whether it be salvation or faith—that gift is not of yourselves: now if the gift mean faith, the apostle is made to say, faith is not of works—a truism which he could be hardly expected to employ. Moreover, every scholar knows that grammar forbids us to interpret the apostle's meaning to be, that our act of believing, is the gift of God, since the pronoun "*that*," and the noun faith, are in different genders, the former being neuter, and the latter feminine.

The other passage misquoted, to prove the divine origin of faith, is this, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith."—Heb. xii, 2. The word "*our*," is in italics, to show it is not in the original; and the word "*author*," signifies leader: and viewed in connexion with the context, it means that Jesus was our example. He in his own life began and ended the life of holy obedience to the will of God. He, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame." He who introduced the Christian religion, is the great pattern in

his own conduct of the religion which he taught. His life, as to his humanity, was a life of faith and holy obedience. He came not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him. In doing and suffering, he acted as the Father's servant. Rich and glorious were the promises which were made him of ample rewards. These he fully and constantly believed. No unbelief ever turned *him* aside from the path of obedience or endurance. For the joy that was set before him, he endured even the ignominious cross, and thus became in his own example the leader and perfecter of that faith, which we, his followers, are required to imitate. Who can help exclaiming,—

“Such was thy truth, and such thy zeal,
Such deference to thy Father's will,
Such love and meekness, so divine,
I would transcribe and make them mine.

“Be thou my pattern—make me bear
More of thy gracious image here :
Then God, the Judge, shall own my name
Amongst the followers of the Lamb.”

Still there are not wanting proofs abundant and convincing, that faith *is* the work of the Spirit in the soul of man. There can be no true belief, without regeneration. The connexion of these two is set forth by the apostle, when he says, “To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on *his* name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”—John i, 12, 13. Hence the need of our constant prayer to God, in the language of the disciples, “Lord, increase our faith ;” and of the petition of the father, who applied for the recovery of his child, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.”

It will be seen from what has been stated, that the

objects of faith are, all the various matters which are contained in the whole Word of God—*what* God has revealed and *all* that God has revealed—the smaller as well as the greater things of the Bible : since, if God has given his testimony, his truth is equally involved in one as well as in the other. Still, this state of mind is more conversant, of course, with those which are more important both to God and to us. His being, attributes, and works—his Providence—his law—the person and work of his Son—the personality, offices, and work of the Holy Spirit—the promise of life to the penitent believer, and the threatening of death to the impenitent sinner—the day of judgment, and the resurrection of the dead. These are the matters, about which the true belief of the Christian mind is more habitually and powerfully exercised, according to the circumstances in which we are placed, and the special truth which is at the time before the mind.

Two great principles must now be mentioned, and which are, first—that as faith is confidence in God for something he has said, where there is no testimony there can be no faith : where God has said nothing, nothing can be believed. Faith cannot take a step, but on the ground of revelation. In many cases there may be reasonable ground for hope, but in the absence of testimony there can be no persuasion. The conversion of particular persons in whom we feel a deep interest—the recovery of friends dangerously ill—the success of particular efforts for the spread of religion—the prosperity of our laudable and promising undertakings—cannot be matter of faith in the full meaning of the term, because we have no testimony of God concerning them. Persons are sometimes said to have strong faith because they are very confident in these matters ; while others who have not the same confidence are reproached

as very weak in faith. In this case the wrong words are employed, for all that can be truly said of these two classes of persons is, that the one is more hopeful and sanguine than the other: and the other more timid and fearful. Nor will it do to say that the mind is so strongly impressed with the certainty of the thing desired, that it may be received itself as a testimony of God. Impressions of this kind are dangerous things to trust: if real, they would be revelations, and would still require something else to accredit them. Multitudes have had, as they supposed, these impressions, and also the faith which rests upon them, who have lived to see that the whole was delusion, and that they had substituted their wishes for the testimony of God. The life of a Christian is a life regulated by God's Word, understood and believed—and not a life guided by inward impressions.

Another great principle is—that as faith is a practical belief of God's testimony, where there is no practice there is no faith, and that there is just as much faith as there is practice, and no more. All the truths of revelation are in their own nature practical truths: *i. e.*, truths leading the mind that receives them into a state of activity. They are not mere scientific principles which have accomplished their end, when upon the ground of their own evidence, they have been admitted as mere knowledge into the intellect. They are all of themselves, and according to their own nature, adapted as well as intended to move the will and the affections, and to lead to appropriate actions. And they are of a kind to move the mind and heart very powerfully. If the testimony comes in the form of an invitation, it will infallibly, if believed, lead us to accept it—if of a promise, to rejoice in it—if of a precept, to obey it—and if of a threatening, to tremble at it: and consequently if these

effects do not follow there is no belief. This shews the delusion which many careless persons are living under, who when called upon to believe in Christ, reply that they already do believe, while it is evident they are wanting in repentance, peace, and holiness. It is obviously their mistake, for if they really believed the testimony of God concerning his law, sin, pardon, heaven, and hell, they would certainly repent, be happy, and holy. Similar to this is the error of many inquirers after salvation, who when called upon to relieve their minds of the burden of guilt, and rejoice by faith, reply, that they do believe, but cannot rejoice: this again, in the nature of things, is impossible; unless indeed there be a physical and morbid defect in their constitution, for the real belief of glad tidings concerning ourselves must produce gladness. It is of immense importance to attend to this connection between real belief and the effects which follow. No truth can be truly assented to which does not produce its own nature, or appropriate effects, in the mind that cordially receives it. Let there be only the true and firm belief, and these effects must by a moral necessity follow. Is it conceivable that a man can truly believe that the house is on fire, and not even get up and flee, unless he has lost the use of his limbs by a stroke of paralysis: or can any man really believe that a pardon is granted him when under sentence of death, and yet not rejoice? This shows where the great defect lies, and where the soul must begin in all religious matters. The apostle says, "*Add to your faith, virtue,*" and all the other graces. As this is weak, every thing else will be weak; and as this is strong, every thing else will be strong. It is to our whole religion what the mainspring is to the watch, regulating all its movements, and keeping all in good order and action. This will lead us to see not

only how our personal religion is to be improved, sustained, and kept in vigorous action, which is by strengthening our faith; but equally how our faith itself is to be strengthened. This is a state of mind which admits of various degrees, from the most feeble, hesitating, and fluctuating expectation, up to the most full, entire, and confident persuasion. Hence the Scriptures speak of weak faith, strong faith, and the full assurance of faith. We can therefore easily perceive how this grace is to be strengthened; and that is, not by any direct and abstract determinations of the will; not only by labour with ourselves, apart from the contemplation of appropriate objects; nor merely by prayer, though this of course is to be sincerely and fervently offered; but by attentively and devoutly considering the grounds of belief. How do we strengthen our confidence in a fellow-creature? Not merely by saying with ever such force of determination, "I *will* trust him." Our doubts and fears will never yield to such a resolution, but will be far too strong for our implicit trust, if at the same time we do not take into consideration his actual trustworthiness. He has promised perhaps to become our friend, and to help us out of pecuniary difficulties which press heavily upon us. In this case, two things are requisite to enable us to confide in him—his veracity and his ability. And to strengthen our confidence, we say to ourselves, "I know he is able to help me, for he is a man of great wealth: and at the same time he is a man of unimpeachable veracity. He is a most veritable man." In this way, we grow in faith. We read over and over his letter, and at each perusal feel our confidence strengthened.

This is natural, and it is intelligible; and it is precisely thus our confidence in God is to be strengthened. We are to read over, and over, and over again, his blessed

Word, his “exceeding great and precious promises,” and with the wondrous words before us, we are to meditate upon the attributes of God—his love—his power—his veracity—his unchangeableness—and as we read, we are to say, “Yes, here is his Word: I cannot mistake; it is no vision of the imagination; no illusion of the senses; no mere deduction of my reason; no offspring of my wishes; it is written in terms too plain to be misunderstood, and he cannot be unfaithful: ‘The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but he cannot alter the thing that is gone out of his lips.’”

‘ His every word of grace is strong,
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along,
Speaks all the promises.’ ”

This is plain, palpable, obvious. Our doubts are many; our fears are strong; our faith is feeble, just because we are not more conversant with our Bibles, and with our God. It is astonishing how a single text will sometimes invigorate and strengthen the confidence of the mind that contemplates it.

By this time you will perceive what a noble principle is that of which we are now treating. It is eminently *rational*: far above reason, but harmonious with it. Yea, it is itself the highest reason, its loftiest exercise. It is sustained by all the evidence that accredits the object on which it is fixed, and this is to a greater amount than was ever accumulated on any other subject. The believer can appeal not only to the stream of current traditions flowing along in the channel of authentic ecclesiastical history, from the very time of Christ and his apostles; he can not only speak of the uninterrupted belief of the church through eighteen centuries; he can not only call up the

shades of fathers, martyrs, and reformers, to corroborate his own opinion; he can not only tell of nations, both learned and rude, which have received the same truths which support, and cheer, and sanctify, and save him; but he can go down deeper still for the foundations on which his faith rests, and can survey with admiration and delight the basis of evidence on which they, as well as himself, have rested their confidence. Instead of repudiating his reason by believing, he feels that he should be repudiating it if he did not believe. To him the man who rejects Christianity, notwithstanding the evidence by which it is sustained, is the most astounding instance of irrationality in the world; while he who believes the gospel, is the most striking instance of the purest reason.

Nor can we hesitate to pronounce it a *noble* principle. Noble it must be if it is rational, and rational it is in the highest degree. It has been the delight of infidels and philosophers to represent the principle of religious belief as a low and degrading superstition, as the slavery of the human intellect, and as a chain upon man's eagle understanding, which prevents his adventurous flight into the regions of speculation. Mistaken men, how ignorant are they both of its nature and their own! How thoroughly deluded by their own pride and vain conceits! In addition to what has been said about the rationality of faith,—and which is not only sufficient to protect it from scorn and contempt, but to lift it to the highest honour, even as an exercise of the understanding,—consider the truths with which it is conversant, and the objects on which it fixes its piercing, unblenching, and steady eye. Philosophy is conversant only with the lower truths—faith with the higher: philosophy has to do with matter and the rational mind—faith with the immortal soul: philosophy is sense, minis-

tering to reason—faith is reason ministering to religion : philosophy searches the works of creation—faith has to do with the Creator himself : philosophy has no necessary connexion with moral influence—faith is the root of all virtue : philosophy yields no motive to submission, and opens no source of consolation amidst the ills of life—faith supplies the balm of consolation and opens the springs of comfort for every sufferer : philosophy is of the earth, earthly—faith relates to the Divine and heavenly : philosophy is wholly engaged about things seen and temporal—faith, soaring on angel-wing above the low and narrow horizon of time and sense, descends the vast future, and looks at things unseen and eternal. Is faith then a subject for philosophy to sneer at ? Talk of her eagle-wing and eye—compared with faith, philosophy is but as the gnat whirling round the dim taper in a little dark room, to the bird of day, soaring in mid-heaven, to the sun in his zenith. Faith enters the region which to mere reason is a *terra incognita*, and explores subjects which never approach the horizon of unaided intellect. The existence, nature, and attributes, of one supreme, eternal, Self-existence, who is the cause of all things, himself uncaused—the creation of the material universe—the history of our species, at once their original and their fallen condition—the origin and entrance of moral evil to our globe—the law and nature of moral excellence, together with the nature and evil of sin—the doctrine of an all-comprehending, wise, and minute Providence—the immortality of the soul—the scheme of mediation by Jesus Christ for man's salvation—the way of pardon—the resurrection of the body, and eternal life—the eternal glories of heaven, and the endless torments of the bottomless pit—these, these, are the matters and the objects of faith ; these, the Alpine regions of thought, amidst

which it dwells, and which it daily contemplates. It is in habitual communion with the first truth, and the chief good. It leaves the region of sense, and goes where sense cannot follow it, and where even reason cannot go alone, and can only follow with timorous, hesitating step. How does it ennoble all who possess it, raising them into fellowship, not only with prophets and apostles, martyrs and reformers, but with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ! Surely, surely, this is not a state of mind deserving the sneer of philosophic pride, or of literary contempt; when it raises the Christian peasant, or the converted savage, or the heaven-taught child, to an elevation which leaves the man of mere reason all but infinitely beneath him.

And then how peaceful and tranquil a state of mind is that of faith. Well might the apostle speak of "peace and joy in believing." Why, believing in any case, when the objects of it are gladsome, and the evidence of their reality is conclusive, is a pleasant state of mind. What then must the joy of faith be, where the matter believed is so momentous to us, as well as so magnificent in itself; and where the evidence is so decisive. It is said that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." Now it is in these paths that the believer always walks, amidst the beautiful scenery that opens, and the lovely flowers that grow on every hand. To have a volume always in our hand, which is full of the most glorious doctrines, the most gracious invitations, the most precious promises, the most salutary counsels, the wisest maxims, and the most faithful warnings, and all addressed to us: never to open the Book but to meet some kind seasonable word addressing us; never to take a step but to see some flower of mercy growing in our path, or to hear some note of love sounding in our ears: never to look at one object but

it puts on a smile even upon grief, as if the beams of a reconciled God, our Father in heaven, had fallen upon it, and were reflected from it—and all this is the blessed privilege of faith—is not this peace, tranquillity, happiness?

“‘T is a broad land of wealth unknown,
Where springs of life arise ;
Seeds of immortal bliss are sown,
And hidden glory lies.”

And here it is the believer dwells, to enrich himself with this wealth ; to drink of these springs ; to gather the fruit which grows from these seeds ; and to bring out and appropriate this concealed glory.

1. How important is it rightly to understand this great first principle of the Divine life in the soul of man, which is set forth as the subject of this treatise. First principles, in all matters, must be well understood, or all that follows will be defective or erroneous. It is especially so in religion, which many do not see. Instead of an intelligent believing giving rise to a right doing, there is a blind wrong doing from beginning to end—a mere mechanical, or at best, imitative doing of something, they scarcely know what, or why. Religion is a conformity of conduct to the written Word of God, and it is of necessity that we must first understand the meaning, and then believe the truth, of that Word. This *is* religion, a character formed, a line of conduct pursued, in full confidence of the truth of this document, as the rule of our actions. When the attention is a little roused to a consideration of this momentous concern, many have their thoughts almost entirely engaged with the question, “What must I do?” But is there not another and a previous question to be asked, “What must I BELIEVE?” Religion is equally unsound whether it is all creed or no creed. It begins in right believing and goes on to right doing : and right believing

must, through the whole of the Christian life, be the guide of right doing. Faith is the root, out of which grows the whole tree of our godliness—its trunk, its branches, its leaves, and its fruit. It is this which, striking its fibres into the Word of God as its proper soil, draws up the moisture which nourishes it, and which has first come down from heaven. It is only as we understand this, that we can begin or continue in a course of true, practical, and experimental religion.

2. If this be true, religion has, of course, much that is objective in its nature; by which I mean, that there is much out of man's own mind with which it is conversant, and upon which it lives. If it be a process of faith, this must of necessity be the case, inasmuch as the objects of faith are something without ourselves. We must not be wholly, or primarily taken up with subjective religion—that is with our own hearts. The mind is dark as to the subjects of religious truth, and we see nothing, and *can* see nothing in a true point of view, till we see it in the light of Divine truth. Hence the expression, "The entrance of thy word giveth light unto the simple." Hence also the frequent prayers of the apostle in his letters to the churches, that the spirit of wisdom and revelation might be given; and his exhortation to "let the word of Christ dwell in them in all wisdom;" and "as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby." There is a great mistake in many who are almost wholly taken up with subjective religion, to the neglect of that which is objective. Instead of reading and studying God's Word to gain right ideas, and to receive the truth in the exercise of an intelligent belief, as sources of right feeling, rules of conduct, and principles of action, they are ever busy with their own thoughts, emotions, and affections, trying to work up their feelings to terror, joy, or

grief—always wandering in a region of imagination, either exalted to rapture, or depressed to despondency—and without ceasing, microscopically examining the states of their own feeling, while all this while they have very little to do with the Divine Word. Their whole religion is rather fancy than faith: a kind of dreamy state of sickly or sentimental devotion. All which is as rational as a man's lighting his house with a dim taper while he keeps the shutters closed and excludes the light of the sun, and contenting himself with looking at the furniture of his own room, instead of looking through the windows to see the glorious landscape which spreads out before and around his habitation.

There is another mistake which a higher class of religious professors are in our day fast falling into. I mean the exercise and cultivation of the spiritual life, apart from the Word of God. We hear and read a great deal of man's inner life; of the necessity and duty of his going down into the depths of his own consciousness; of his walking by the light of his own intuitions; of his edueing from his own nature principles of action; and calling forth susceptibilities to and sympathies with the true, the good, and the fair, which are hidden there, and only want to be quickened into action by self-reflection. If by all this, be meant nothing more than that self-communion, self-examination, and self-exhortation, by the Word of God, which *in* that Word is every where enjoined, it is all very good, and cannot be too earnestly enjoined. But if as is but too evident, it signifies a species of self-cultivation, apart from the Word and the exercises of an objective faith—an inward life, carried on, if not begun, by reason, without revelation—a spiritualism which has no necessary connexion with the Scriptures, and can be maintained without them—we say it is a kind of religion

of which the Bible knows nothing—and is an approach to the pietism of a bygone age, which made way for Rationalism in Germany, and will make way for it here too, if it extensively prevail. Let the notion once be prevalent that piety towards God is something apart from, or in addition to, an intelligent belief in the written Word,—a subjective matter which may be carried on by a man's retiring into himself, and communing with his own consciousness, and finding there all he needs, if not for his pardon, yet for his spiritual life—and we are then prepared to merge all religious truth, all doctrinal theology, in the vortex of an unscriptural, unsanctified, and unsubstantial spiritualism—in other words, the inspired, infallible, and exclusive rule of religious faith, feeling, and action, is substituted by a mysticism, which has no rule, no support, and no object, but itself.

These two, the objective and the subjective, must ever go together in true religion. The objective, or the grand truths of revelation apprehended and believed, are of little use unless they produce the subjective—that is, repentance, faith, love, and holiness: while on the other hand the subjective cannot be of a right kind unless it be produced by the objective. In other words, that is not right faith which does not lead to practice; and that is not a right practice which does not spring from faith. There must be the Bible out of us, contemplated and believed, and the Bible in us, in all its principles of holy feeling, volition, and action. As external objects viewed by the organ of vision, paint their own images on the retina of the eye, so the truths of revelation, when looked at by the eye of faith, delineate them on the retina of the soul: and as in the former case, there could be no knowledge without looking at the objects, so neither can there be in the latter.

CHAPTER II.

FAITH IN JUSTIFICATION.

A PARDONED criminal who had been condemned by the laws of his country to an ignominious death is an affecting and interesting object to look upon. To see *him* walking abroad, in the full possession of liberty, who had so recently been loaded with fetters in a dungeon—enjoying the light of heaven, after having been shrouded with darkness, relieved only by the few straggling rays that came through the iron gratings of his cell—surveying the beauties of creation, in place of looking on the cold, dank walls of his prison-house—rejoicing in the consciousness of freedom and life, in lieu of brooding over the gallows and death—delighting in the society of his family and friends, in exchange for the sullen converse of fellow-criminals and turnkeys—feeling, in short, that he was again a citizen, with all his rights and privileges, as a man and a member of the community, after having been stripped of them all. What a change of circumstances! What an ineffably delightful reverse! How many reflections does it excite! We think of his past sin and misery in his felon's character—of the mercy of the sovereign in reprieving him—of his own felicity in being spared—of his gratitude to the bestower of his life—of his future obligations to perform the duties of a good citizen.

There, in that case, is the representation, and but a faint one too, of the situation of every real Christian. He

too *was* a sentenced, *is* a pardoned, criminal. He has sinned—has been condemned—has repented—has believed— and is pardoned. *His* forfeited life has been restored. The fountain of mercy has been opened to him; a reprieve has been bestowed; and from an enemy, an outcast, and a criminal, he has become a friend, a servant, a child, of God. What a transition—how wondrous in itself! How much more wondrous in the method of accomplishing it! THAT we now proceed to consider.

What is JUSTIFICATION?

This is an unspeakably momentous question. The term itself suggests this; its ordinary import is deeply important. It implies an accusation, and expresses a clearance. Its importance is learnt also from the large space it occupies and fills on the page of Scripture. The most valuable of all Paul's epistles, I mean that to the Romans, and also the one to the Galatians, were written to unfold it. No one can understand the New Testament, or the gospel scheme of salvation, who does not comprehend it. Immense consequence then attaches to the question, What is the justification which is the subject of apostolic teaching?

- It is *not any change in our moral nature* that is regeneration—but is a change *of our relation to God*. Nor is it our being made *personally just*, for it is admitted we are sinners, and we cannot therefore be personally righteous and unrighteous too. Nor is it any impression or persuasion on our own minds that we *are* justified. It is not uncommon for a certain class of religionists to speak of their having been justified at such a time and place, when all they mean is, that then and there they obtained a sense of pardon.

- Neither is it any thing which according to the Popish and Puseyite notion *takes place in and by baptism*. It is

not effected at the font through the sacerdotal ministrations of the priest, when as we are told, the guilt of original sin is taken away by the sacramental grace conferred with the baptismal fluid. The New Testament conveys no such notion as this.

Justification, we say at once, is *substantially* the same as pardon. The two words convey the same, or nearly the same idea. The apostle appears to use them convertibly, where he says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying. Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin."—Rom. iv, 5—8. "In these verses," says Dr. Wardlaw, "the *forgiveness of iniquity*, the *covering of transgression*, the *non-imputation of sin*, are evidently considered as amounting to the same thing with the *imputation of righteousness*; and this also is the same as *justifying the ungodly*: for David is represented as describing under one set of phrases the blessedness which the apostle expresses by the others." Still, as the apostles in the language of the New Testament so generally employ the word *justification* rather than the word *pardon*, there must be some reason for this, which I think is to be found in the two following considerations. First.—The word justification, while it means pardon, is used to convey the idea of the method by which this pardon is bestowed; that is, *pardon in a way of righteousness*. So that the word embraces both the blessing and the way of its bestowal, according to the demands of the law. Secondly.—It denotes a general and *permanent state* of pardon, and not merely a particular *act*. By justification

we are brought into a new and permanent relation—a *state* of favour. Justification is our introduction into this abiding condition; so that though pardon may be needed, and may be granted to us in this state from day to day, *justification* cannot be said to be *repeated* day to day. By justification we pass from the state of an enemy into that of a child: in this view of it, it is equivalent with adoption, and in this condition we may and do receive the paternal forgiveness day by day, though not the judicial clearance. Justification is the act of the judge relieving us from the sentence of condemnation, and bringing us into a *state* of favour; and subsequent acts of pardon are the expressions of the father, in passing by our transgressions. Still we repeat, the two terms mean substantially the same thing; and justification is pardon. They are certainly never enumerated together as two distinct blessings. We never read of pardon *and* justification. I know it has been common with some of the old divines to represent them as distinct; to consider justification as given to us on the ground of Christ's *active obedience*, and pardon on the ground of his *passive obedience*, or sufferings unto death. No such distinction, however, is made by the apostles; and as Dr. Wardlaw says in reference to this subject, there is no need for our being more minute in our distinctions than these inspired men. Our being introduced into a *state* of pardon through the atonement of Christ, is justification.

It has been usual to call this a forensic transaction, or a proceeding in a court of law. Perhaps it would be more correct to consider it as an exercise of royalty—the putting forth of kingly prerogative, in extending mercy to a rebellious subject—the act of the executive in the Divine government in relieving a criminal out of regard to something done to satisfy public justice.

Such, then, is justification—the opposite to condemnation—the act of God’s boundless mercy in forgiving all the transgressions of the penitent believer, for the sake of the propitiatory sacrifice of his beloved Son; and restoring the once guilty transgressor to the favour of God, and the hope of eternal life. Well might David in a kind of rapture exclaim, “Blessed,”—or as the abruptness of the original more emphatically expresses it—“O, the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.”

In considering this subject accurately and fully, four things are to be taken into consideration;—the meaning of the term, or the blessing it designates—pardon: the ground on which it proceeds—the death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice for sin: the source from which it flows—the mercy of God: the instrumental cause or means—faith in Christ.

In this treatise we have to do with the latter, or the *connection* of *faith* with our justification.

If we are to be pardoned in a way of righteousness, it is plain we cannot be forgiven on the ground of a righteousness of our own, for we have not any. None but a perfect obedience could be accepted by the law, as the ground of justification; and if we had that to offer, there would have been no sin, and therefore no need of pardon. Where there is no sin, there can be no forgiveness. Up to the time of his justification, the sinner is supposed to have been living in sin, and therefore has no works at all to offer as a satisfaction to Divine justice, on the ground of which he can be received into a state of favour. Hence the reiterated declaration: “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”—Rom. iii, 20. “Therefore we

conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."—Rom. iii, 28. "To him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."—Rom. iv, 5. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."—Gal. ii, 16. "Not of works, lest any man should boast."—Ephes. ii, 9. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us"—Titus iii, 5. In all these passages, and in others that might be quoted, it is most distinctly and emphatically declared, that justification does not proceed on the ground of our works.

There is but one other ground on which it *can* proceed, and that is FAITH. And this is as explicitly declared as that other. To quote all the passages of God's Word on this subject would be needless. In addition to those already given we may introduce the following. "The just shall live by faith."—Rom. i, 17. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."—Rom. v, 1. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."—Ephes. ii, 8. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace."—Rom. iv, 16. It is, then, impossible not to see the high place which faith occupies in the business of our justification. But what *is* this place? What is its office? How does it justify?

We may put this first of all negatively, and show how faith does *not* justify.

It does not justify of and by itself, as an act of our mind: as that for the sake of which, viewed in the light of a meritorious cause, God grants us forgiveness of sins. It is *by* faith, not *for* faith, we are justified. There is an

expression which looks as if faith *itself*, as an act of ours, constituted our justifying righteousness. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."—Rom. iv, 3. "We say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness."—Rom. iv, 9. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God—and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." 20—22. Now it might seem to an ordinary and unreflecting reader, that the apostle intended by this mode of expression to convey the idea that Abraham's *faith*, of and by itself, constituted his righteousness—that his strong confidence in the Divine testimony was accepted in lieu of works, and as tantamount to a complete obedience to the Divine law. This is the view which Luther seems to take in his celebrated commentary on the epistle to the Galatians. But if this be true in reference to Abraham, it is equally true in reference to all believers who are his spiritual seed, and their faith is also *their* righteousness. And if this be true, it will appear that as faith is an act, and so a work, of ours, we are justified by works after all. True, it may be said, this is only a mental work. No matter, it is still a work. This, on general principles, makes it clear that the apostle could not intend that believing was accepted *instead* of doing, and constituted that righteousness on the ground of which Abraham was justified. The preposition rendered in our translation "*for* righteousness;" might and should be rendered "*unto* righteousness." By believing on Christ as God's righteousness, or God's method of justification, a man becomes truly righteous—comes into the state of a righteous or justified man. We have the preposition so rendered in several places where the same subject is discussed. "The gospel is the power

of God *unto* salvation.”—Rom. i, 16. “Even the righteousness of God which is *unto* all them that believe.”—Rom. iii, 22. “For with the heart man believeth *unto* righteousness.”—Rom. x, 10. This is the signification of the phrase in the verse before us, which should have been translated in the same way. The expression “unto righteousness” is elliptical, and signifies “*unto the receiving*” of righteousness, or in order to his becoming righteous. In the different French translations the meaning of the original is properly expressed, “*a justice* ;” that is to say, unto righteousness. And in the same way in the Vulgate, “*ad justitiam*,” to or towards righteousness. That faith itself, as an act of our own mind, is not the justifying righteousness, is demonstrably evident from the very phraseology of many passages that speak of belief and righteousness in the same place ; “Even the *righteousness of God*, which is *by faith* of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe.”—Rom. iii, 22. Here righteousness is supposed to be one thing and faith another. Righteousness is what we want in order to justification ; faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as testified in the gospel, is the means through which we receive this righteousness. Believing then is not the righteousness, but is the means by which we become righteous. Can language more explicitly shew that righteousness and faith are two different things for two different purposes, though both are enjoyed by the same persons, and both equally necessary ? In like manner the apostle says, “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”—Rom. x, 10. Here it is necessarily implied that faith is not righteousness, but that it is the means through which we receive righteousness. Nothing can be a greater corruption of the truth than to represent

believing itself as accepted instead of righteousness, or to be the righteousness that saves the sinner.*

Nor are we to understand that faith justifies us as a mere *sine qua non*, simply as a condition, in the same way as repentance is a condition. God requires in the man who would be forgiven and restored to his favour—sincere contrition and confession, and the forsaking of his sins—“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”—Isaiah lv, 7. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”—1 John i, 9. Now these things are conditions of pardon, yet we cannot with propriety and precision say, “We are justified by confession, sorrow, and repentance.” This is the office and business of faith. There is a fitness, not indeed a meritorious one, but a natural one; that is, a fitness in the nature of believing, to accomplish this great end—our justification before God. For observe the nature of faith, it is “the confidence of things hoped for.”

We remark then that,

1. Faith believes our need of justification. It credits the testimony of God concerning our condemnation by the law. No man will concern himself at all about pardon till he is convinced of sin. Here is its first exercise, to believe that “all the world is become guilty before God.” “That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” That we are “all by nature the children of wrath:” that this curse of God upon sin is no slight one, but an everlasting separation from his presence. It is only by a belief of God’s Word we know what sin is in its nature and consequences. Reason may discern that it is not all

* See Haldane’s Exposition of the Romans.

right with us, that there is some disorder in the soul ; but it knows nothing of the cause, the virulence, or the extent of the malady. It is revelation that lays open all this to us, that discovers to us our entire corruption ; that shows us our alarming state, and our dreadful need of spiritual recovery. Here then is the first lesson which faith learns, and a most humbling one it is : that we are in a fearful state of condemnation, by the law we have broken—that we are exposed to the wrath to come, to the bitter pains of eternal death—and that we need instant and adequate relief. True, this is not at this stage, saving faith ; and if this were all a man believed, he would never be saved by it. Many do thus believe in the law, who never go on to believe the gospel, and have nothing more than the faith of devils, who believe and tremble. But though this is not itself a saving act, yet it precedes it. A man must believe he is lost before he will care about salvation.

2. By faith the sinner looks out of himself, —away from himself, for the ground of his justification : this is its second step, or office. It turns away our attention from ourselves. As long as a man is only looking into himself, to discover what he can find there to stand between him and the God whom he has offended, he has not a particle of true belief in him. While he is saying, What can *I* do, he is turning away from the gospel testimony. Here we must recur to what has been already said, that belief is objective in its nature. It turns its eye outward, not inward. Its consideration is not what it can draw out of the soul, but what it can draw into it. When Noah was called to be saved from the waters of the deluge, he was to look away from his own resources ; when the manslayer fled from the avenger of blood, he was called to look away from his own means of defence ; when the serpent-bitten

Israelites were saved from the venom of the poisonous reptiles, they were called to look away from their own skill in the art of healing; when the cripple that lay at the beautiful gate of the temple asked alms of Peter and John, he was called to look away from his own misery and destitution. Precisely thus it is with the sinner seeking justification, he must look away from himself; and it is the especial business of the grace we are speaking of, to lead him away from himself. If justification were by works, he must be intent upon himself—look into his soul—calculate his resources—measure his ability: and this is the course of multitudes, till they come to have a clearer view of God's way of saving them. Their whole attention is concentrated on themselves, they think of nothing but themselves. But when taught by the Spirit of God, all is changed, they now see and feel that they *are* nothing, and can *do* nothing for their own justification. They find they are in debt ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay; that they are condemned by the law, and have no means of averting the sentence; that they are hungry and have no bread; sick and no medicine. This is a glorious achievement of faith, to reveal to the sinner his utter penury and helplessness—to strip him of all his proud self-sufficiency and independence—to bring him to a deep sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

But let it be still remembered, he is not even when brought thus far, arrived at the point of safety. He may believe all this, and perish after all. This is credence but of a vague, general, incomplete nature; and if it stop here, it would not constitute a real reception of the gospel.

3. Faith confides fully and unhesitatingly in Christ. It not only sees there is no righteousness any where else, but it sees there *is* righteousness there: not only leads a

man to look away from self, but to look to Christ. Noah not only looked away from his own resources, but he looked to, entered into, the ark with confidence, for he believed God's word. The manslayer not only looked away from his own strength, but looked to the city of refuge, and fled to it with confidence of safety. The serpent-bitten Israelites not only looked away from their own skill in the art of healing, but looked to the brazen serpent with confidence. The cripple not only looked away from himself, but gave heed to Peter and John, expecting with confidence to receive alms. In all these cases, there was confidence, reliance, expectation—in short, a true, firm belief of the reality and sufficiency of the promised relief. Not only a sense of want and of utter helplessness and hopelessness in themselves, but an assured, hopeful, peace-giving dependence upon the provision of God's mercy. So it is with him who really credits the gospel: he looks away from self, and concentrates all his attention upon Christ. There is in his mind such a belief of the Divine testimony concerning him, as leads him by an act of the will, to commit the soul with perfect confidence into his hands. Such a confidence not only renounces the sinner's own righteousness, but receives and depends upon Christ's: it not only says, "*I cannot* be accepted for my own works," but, "*I can* be accepted in the beloved." In turning away from self, and rejecting all self-righteousness, it does not stand in blank desolation—in ignorant solicitude—in hopeless despondency—looking hither and thither in vain for a tower of help; but it sees direct before its eye the cross of Christ rising up in all its grandeur and glory, as the sole means of reconciliation with God: it hears the voice of love and mercy issuing from it, "Look unto me and be ye saved:" it feels

hope, springing up within the bosom, of acceptance with God, and exultingly exclaims, "It *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "He *is* able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I now commit to him." This,—this is faith—justifying faith—saving faith; committing the soul to Christ—confidence, in Christ.

Thus the soul goes out of itself into Christ. It is thus united to him; and in virtue of that blessed union, obtains an interest in all that is in him for the salvation of his people. Now, the merit of his obedience unto death passes over to the account and benefit of the soul that is thus brought into vital union with him. Now, the member receives all the vital influence of the Divine Head to which it is joined: now, the branch derives the life of the true vine into which it is grafted: now, the stone receives the support of the sure foundation on which it rests.

These are thy doings, heaven-bestowed faith!—these thy triumphs and thy trophies—precious, wondrous gift of God! The prison door has been broken open—the fetter has been struck off from the condemned criminal—the sentence of death has been cancelled—the royal clemency has been bestowed—and the reprieved man, redeemed by sovereign grace, walks abroad, singing as he goes, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.

And hope maketh not ashamed ; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”—Rom. v. 1—5.

We are now prepared to see the force, as well as the meaning, of the apostle’s language already quoted, “ Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.”—Rom. iv, 16 ; and also of the parallel passage, “ By grace ye are saved through faith.”—Ephes. ii, 8. Grace means free favour on God’s part, as opposed to debt. What is owed in the way of justice, cannot possibly be given in the way of favour. Salvation is all of grace from beginning to end. It is grace viewed as a whole, and grace in all its details. Election is of grace. Regeneration is of grace. Sanctification is of grace. Conservation is of grace. And of course the same may be said of the blessing we are now considering. So says the apostle : “ That being justified freely by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”—Titus iii, 7. How clearly and impressively does grace appear in this method of our pardon, and reception into the favour of God —by the mere belief of Divine mercy—the mere act of confiding ourselves into the hands of Christ. That one act of confidence makes and marks the wondrous transition from a state of condemnation to a state of justification. No lengthened service carried on through a series of years—no toilsome pilgrimages no bodily macerations—no munificent offerings—no ascetic performances—no lofty moralities—no rigid self-denials—in which the mind may glory, and say, “ See what I have done to merit the favour of God : ” no : nothing of the sort—“ ONLY BELIEVE ” is the language of Christ. Can there be any thing less meritorious—any thing which more clearly demonstrates that it is all of grace, than this unmeritorious condition of our

acceptance with God. And yet, can any thing more honour God? What confidence in his truthfulness, mercy, and love, does that act of committal imply. To throw ourselves upon his promise, whatever may have been the number and aggravation of our sins: even at the last hour, it may be of a long life began and continued in crime, like that of the penitent thief upon the cross, to believe that God's mercy can and will reach us there: to be confident that—

“ The guilt of twice ten thousand sins
One moment takes away.”

() what a triumphant confidence in the mercy of God, and the efficacy of the Saviour's blood! It exalts God as high, as it lays the sinner low.

But here we just stop to meet and remove an objection. “How,” say some, “can justification be of grace, if it be granted to us for the sake of an atonement? Does not the idea of a satisfaction to public justice destroy the idea of free favour?” Not at all. If the atonement were made by the offender himself enduring the full penalty of the law, his deliverance would be a matter of right, and there would be no grace in it. Or if the sufferings of another could avail for the offender, and he himself were to provide the substitute, and it were a substitute which the injured party were under any obligation to receive, and could not honourably or equitably refuse, his deliverance in that case also might be matter of right, and there might be no grace in it. Or, if God were by any consideration of justice obliged to *provide* a substitute, and to send his Son to die as an atonement for us, grace would be excluded. But when the whole scheme was a matter of pure Divine benevolence—when God might have punished the sinner in his own proper person, and not have allowed of substi-

tution at all—when he freely gave Him up to die upon the cross for us—and when this was in no sense designed to render him placable, but only to harmonize his mercy with his justice, grace is as rich, as full, as free, as if no atonement had been necessary. Nay, grace shines out a thousand times brighter through the medium of the cross, than it would have done without it. How rich, how wonderful that mercy, which, when there seemed no way for its consistent manifestation except by the death of Christ, “Spared him not, but freely gave him up for us all.” The cross of Jesus, while it is the meridian glory of Divine justice, is no less the noon-tide splendour of Divine mercy also.

The view we have taken of justification enables us to correct some errors which have been entertained upon the subject. We see the preposterous absurdity of the antinomian notion of *eternal* justification. A believer, they say, is justified from all eternity, because he is elected to this state. On this principle he was *created* from all eternity. This is such an utter confusion of God’s purposes and his acts, that it is a wonder such an offspring of human folly should ever have existed. If we are justified *by* faith, how can we have been justified *before* it?

Equally erroneous are they who would in any sense hold the merit of human actions in the sight of God, as is the case with the Roman Catholic Church. The following are the decrees of the Council of Trent, the last General Council of the Roman Catholic Church, and therefore the perpetual law of that apostate communion: “If any one shall say that men are justified either by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness alone, or only by the remission of sins, to the exclusion of grace and charity, which is poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and which is inherent

in them; or that the grace by which we are justified is the favour of God alone—LET HIM BE ACCURSED.”

“If any one shall say that the good works of a justified man, are in such sense, the gift of God, that they are not also his worthy merits; or, that he being justified by his good works, which are wrought by him through the grace of God, and the merit of Jesus Christ, of whom he is a living member, does not really **DESERVE** increase of grace, eternal life, the enjoyment of that eternal life, if he dies in a state of grace; and even an increase of glory—LET HIM BE ACCURSED.”

Such, and so awful and daring, is the contradiction of that dreadful communion, to the plain letter and pervading spirit of the Word of God. This is the corner-stone in the foundation of that huge fabric of falsehood and error.

Perhaps it will be thought by some that the language of the apostle James, in which he seems to contradict Paul, sustains the doctrine of the church of Rome. In reply to this we say, if both were inspired, there can be no contradiction between them. There must be a medium to be found somewhere. True it is that Paul says, “A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law:” and equally true that James says, “That by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” It will be noticed at once by any reflecting mind that the two apostles have two different classes of persons in view; one of them—the class to whom Paul addresses himself, consisted of the Judaising zealots who *perverted* the gospel by insisting upon the works of the law as the ground of justification: the other—the class to whom James addressed himself, consisted of those who *abused* the doctrine of justification by faith alone, to sanction the neglect of duty and the per-

formance of good works. And moreover, as the two writers deal with two classes of persons, so they discuss two subjects—Paul is speaking of the justification of a *sinner*—James the justification of a *Christian*. Paul uses the word justification in its own generally accepted meaning of receiving the sinner into a state of favour and acceptance with God—James uses it in application to the Christian in the sense of his being approved as a believer. Paul shews how a man becomes justified—James shews the necessity of works to *prove* the reality of his faith, or to demonstrate that a man is a believer. So that there is no contradiction, but the most entire harmony between them : and neither Paul nor James affords any countenance to the fundamental and destructive error of the Church of Rome—that the pardon of a sinner is by the works of the law.

But the view given of justification by faith reveals also the Puseyite error of baptismal justification. This, as we have already hinted, is a commonly received opinion among the Tractarian party, that the grace communicated by sacerdotal hands in baptism, conveys remission of sins as well as regeneration. Yet is it somewhat difficult to conceive how sins can be *remitted* before they are *committed*, if we except original *sin*. I submit with deference whether baptismal justification is *not* necessarily implied in the sponsorial service of the Church of England, as performed in the baptism of infants. In that service the *sponsor* personates the *child*, and believes for, or in the name of, the infant. The child believes thus by proxy ; in other words, he exercises faith through his representative. Now the Word of God assures us that faith and justification are ever united ; consequently the infant is in all cases justified as well as regenerated in baptism. The priest

obtains and confers regeneration, while the sponsor obtains and confers justification. At least, this is how it strikes me.*

How have men by their traditions made void God's ordinances. In what clouds and darkness have they veiled his glorious doctrine of justification by faith. How have human systems been thrust between the sinner and the cross, and the eye which should see nothing but the latter, has been made to rest upon the former; and the poor benighted soul is left on the way to eternity to stumble over the errors which have been cast in his path by those who should be his guide to everlasting life.

How much does this great fundamental Protestant Christian doctrine deserve our attention. This was the means by which apostles converted the world in the beginning of the Christian era. It was the perversion of this truth which called forth that terrible anathema of the apostle; "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."—Gal. i. 8, 9. Why these thunder claps of holy indignation—why these lightning flashes of excited zeal—but to terrify and blast, and strike dead the man who would pervert the doctrine of justification, which Paul

* It is infinitely to be desired for the relief of thousands of tender consciences, both among the clergy and laity of the Church of England, that the offices of the Prayer Book, especially those appertaining to baptism, could be revised and altered. To those who stand without the pale of that communion, it appears that though the Church of England is both historically and doctrinally decidedly Protestant, which if any man doubt let him read an Article in the *Edinburgh Review* for November, yet it is vain to hope for the suppression of Puseyism and all its Romish tendencies as long as the Prayer-Book remains as it is.

thus identifies with the gospel of Christ. The apostle while he sets open the gate to any one who would come to the tree of life with simple faith, places this cherub with a flaming sword to repel the daring intruder who would approach to cut it down and plant the upas tree of error in its place. This was the doctrine with which Luther, more than by any other means, effected the Reformation of the sixteenth century. This was the doctrine so dear to our Puritan and Nonconformist forefathers; a doctrine which I fear some among us begin to think belonged rather to a Puritan age, than it does to our own. In the religious sentimentalism—in the superstitious formalism—in the continental transcendentalism—in the speculative theology—in the demand for, and homage to, talent and genius, which characterise our age, there is a danger of this glorious truth being lost sight of. Protestants, in some instances, are growing tired or ashamed of their Protestantism. The descendants of the Puritans are casting aside their Puritanism; not merely its uncouth phraseology, its scholasticism, its bad taste, and its formal creeds, but its substantial doctrines, its vital piety, and its earnest devotion. The next step in this declension is for Christians to outgrow their Christianity. We have a modern subjectivity rising up which, as we have already remarked, aims to substitute an intuitional consciousness for simple faith, and to give us an inward light for the objective glory of the Sun of Righteousness. Men are casting off the old nomenclature of the Bible, and with the terminology will soon give up the theology which it expresses. We are no advocates for much that is antiquated in the divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. But still how much of sound theology, of apostolic doctrine, of Scriptural truth, is found under that old-fashioned dress. The noble

thoughts and lofty views of such men as Luther and Melancthon, Calvin and Knox, Cartwright and Ainsworth, Howe and Owen, are not to be set aside as worthless and puerile,—men who studied the Bible in circumstances which, if not so favourable as our own for critical exegesis, were eminently conducive to their obtaining large and comprehensive views, deep experience, and earnest life,—men to whom it was likely the secret of the Lord, the mind of the Spirit—would be largely imparted. Let us then hold fast the substantial truths which those men held, not indeed because they held them, but because they are the true sayings of God. There are not only certain doctrines we cannot part with, but certain terms in which they are expressed, which we must ever retain : and among these is that grand and glorious word, or rather phrase, JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH. O, may there be none among us, to whom, in these modern days, this great Protestant truth when sounded forth from the pulpit begins to savour of an antiquated Puritanism, and who would think that they were retracing their steps to the age of the Covenanters, if found reading or writing a treatise on this momentous topic. How can the sinner now live—how can the believer now walk, except by faith ? The holiness, justice, and mercy of God—the authority of the Divine law—the nature of sin—the mediation of Christ—justification—sanctification—remain upon the pages of revelation like the sun, and the moon, and the stars upon the firmament of heaven ; and the mountains, and the rivers, and the seas, and the valleys upon the earth ; the same through all the changes of society, and all the revolutions of time. The piety of that age will depart, in which justification by faith and sanctification by the Spirit, cease to be the life of men's souls. These are the bread of life, and like the bread of

our bodies, though it may be a little improved in the preparation, more separated from the chaff and more finely kneaded, yet must it be the same wheat, however the grinding and winnowing of it may be altered for the better.

How fully, how satisfactorily, and how delightfully does this subject answer the great question, which in all ages has perplexed the troubled conscience, agitated the anxious heart, and baffled the ignorant judgments, of the human race, "*How shall man be just with God?*" To find an answer to this question all sorts of devices have been invented. Even the heathens have had dim notions of guilt, which have struck their scorpion-stings into their bosoms, for they knew that, "They did things worthy of death." Mysterious presentiments of judgment to come, equally intolerable, inscrutable, and unmitigable, have harrowed up their soul, and forced upon them the awful inquiry, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"—Micah vi, 6—8. And they have answered the question according to the suggestion of their own fears; and hence the long train of bloody rites, penances, and sacrifices, which superstition has invented, and the idolatrous nations have practised—but without any other effect than to make them still more guilty and more miserable. But no sooner do we open the Scriptures of truth, and consult the oracle of God, than all this ignorance is removed from our mind—the yearnings of our heart are satisfied—the perturbations of our conscience are calmed—and we are restored

to peace and hope by that wondrous language, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."—Rom. iii, 24—26. There the great and awful problem is solved—solved in a way that dissipates every fear, and sets the anxious heart at rest. There God appears as just to himself, as he is merciful to us, while he forgives all our sins, receives us to his favour, and treats us as righteous. O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, in that wondrous scheme, of which the cross is the centre and the symbol. Man, though a sinner, just with God; yet at the same time, the law magnified—moral government upheld in all its perfection,—and God's attributes of truth, holiness, and justice, no less conspicuously manifested, nor less brightly glorified, than his mercy.

How happy is, or might be, the justified man. What melody, passing all the power of music, whether of earth or heaven, is there in those words already quoted, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Peace with God now; the glory of God hereafter; and the present rejoicing of hope in prospect of the wondrous, ineffable, inconceivable, future! Such privileges are too deep to sound with mortal lines—too dark, through excessive brightness, to view with feeble sense. It not only doth not yet appear what we *shall be*, but what we *are*. We can as little comprehend all the

present, as we can know all the future. What language can help us to draw out all the privileges contained in that one word,—JUSTIFICATION: that one phrase, —AN HEIR OF GOD: that one blessing,—PEACE WITH GOD? O thou that redest these pages, art thou justified? Hast thou good reason to believe that this is thy state? Then rejoice: what could worlds of wealth added to thy possessions do for thee in the way of making thee richer or happier than thou art? How little—how mean—how insignificant—how valueless—do all the objects of human ambition or cupidity appear, when put beside these spiritual blessings in heavenly things and places in Christ Jesus. And what are all thy sorrows, thy cares, and thy losses, when viewed in the light of this happy condition? Tell me of thy poverty and many privations: I will reply, “Yes: but then, think of thy justification!” Tell me of thy disappointed hopes and blasted schemes. “Yes: but thy justification!” Tell me of thy change of circumstances and the painful contrast of the present with the past, and all that thou once expectedst for the future: “Yes: but thy justification!” Tell me of thy friends departed, and thy now lonely and desolate condition: “Yes: but thy justification!” Thus to every tale of want or woe, where that tale comes from the lips of a believer in Christ, I will bring up that one sweet, soothing melody for the troubled spirit,—justification by faith. Cast whatever we may into the scale of our afflictions, it is but the small dust of the balance, when set over against this one eternal weight of blessedness that fills the other scale. He who is really pardoned, received to God’s favour, delivered from the wrath to come, and entitled to eternal life, should be ashamed to imagine that there is or can be a tear in the eye, which this blessing cannot wipe away, or a pang in

the heart, which it cannot assuage. A respited criminal—a man just delivered from the prison and the drop, and raised to the hope of some future glory and honour which are but just before him, may not be supposed to think much of a few present privations and inconveniences : every thing is mercy to him. Such, believer, is your condition : and in addition to this, *you* are going on from the peace of God now, to the glory of God hereafter. This *is* your song now in your weary pilgrimage, “ Grace, grace : ” and at every step you renew the sweet melody, and thus beguile the road. Soon, even that blessed song will be dropped, for one more blessed still, and you will go through eternity, singing, “ Glory, glory ! ”

CHAPTER III.

FAITH IN RELATION TO SANCTIFICATION.

GOD created man in his own image, which consisted of true holiness. No spot of guilt was upon his conscience, nor of depravity upon his heart. The light of truth irradiated his understanding; the glow of perfect love warmed his heart; the volitions of his will were all on the side of purity; his bosom was the seat of perfect peace; and the beauties of holiness adorned his character. His whole soul was in harmony with the untainted scenes of Paradise, in the bowers of which he walked in undisturbed friendship with God. No sorrow wrung his heart—no care wrinkled his brow—no anxiety broke his rest. He passed away with awe from the mysterious tree of knowledge of good and evil, to eat with joy of the tree of life in the midst of the garden. He was happy, because he was holy. He sinned, and his whole moral relation and condition was altered: he fell under the condemnation of the law he had violated, and became the subject of inward corruption. An entire change passed over his nature—he not only became guilty, but depraved—his understanding became darkened—his affections selfish and earthly—his will prone to choose what is wrong—and his conscience benumbed. If he be recovered from this state of double misery, he must be both pardoned and sanctified. His relation and his state must both be changed. Neither of these *alone* will meet his case. He has lost God's favour, and cannot

be saved without being restored to that : and as he has also lost God's image, so neither can he be saved unless that too be restored to him. The covenant of God's love and mercy in Christ Jesus—the glorious scheme of redeeming grace—meets the whole case of fallen man, by providing not only justification, but sanctification. Wonderful provision ! Pardon for the guilty—sanctification for the unholy ! The condition of the sinner may be likened to that of a condemned criminal shut up in prison, and infected with the jail fever ; what he needs, is both the cure of his disorder and the reversal of his sentence : neither alone will meet his case, if he be only reprieved, he will die of the fever—if he be only cured, he will suffer the sentence of the law. So it is with fallen man, he is depraved and condemned—if he be only pardoned, his depravity will be his misery : if he could by any means be reformed, he is still under sentence of death. The glory as well as completeness of the gospel scheme is, that it provides a cure for the diseases of the soul in sanctification, as well as a reprieve from the condemnation of the law in justification.

The verb “to sanctify,” in its etymological meaning, signifies to consecrate, or set apart from a common to a sacred use. It is also synonymous, or nearly so, with the verb “to purify,” and is used convertibly with it : with this difference, however, that purification is employed sometimes in a generic sense, including both justification and sanctification. Where the purification, or cleansing, is by blood, there the word signifies justification : and where by water, sanctification. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. “Who hath washed us from our sins in His own blood.” In these passages, the purification of the conscience, or pardon, is spoken of. It is in this view of purification also we are to understand the

apostle, where in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he speaks of *sanctification* as if it were the same as justification. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."—Hebrews x, 10, 14. Now the whole context proves that the apostle is speaking of pardon, not of holiness; and yet he uses the word "sanctify," which must be understood as one of the two specific varieties of purification. Justification, or pardon, being the purification of the conscience from guilt; sanctification being the purification of the heart and life from depravity. It is important to notice the apostle's use of the word sanctify in the manner just pointed out, to guard the reader of the Epistle to the Hebrews from supposing that in other parts of Scripture, and in theological terminology, it is confounded with justification, and means nothing more or less than holiness.

Sanctification then, means that work of grace which is carried on in the soul of the believer by the Spirit of God, through the instrumentality of Divine truth, whereby they are made more and more like God in righteousness and true holiness.

It will be perceived by an attentive reader, that there is an essential difference between justification and sanctification: these two always go together, but they are essentially distinct in their specific nature. Justification is a change of our *relation* to God—from being an enemy, we become a child: sanctification is a change of our *nature*, in which we lose the spirit of an enemy, and acquire that of a son. Justification is that which we receive for the sake of Christ's atonement: sanctification, that which we receive by the work of the Spirit in us. Justification is complete at once: sanctification is progressive. In justification, we

receive God's love to us : in sanctification, we exercise our love to God. Upon a right understanding of the difference of these two blessings, depends our correct knowledge of the whole scheme of redemption. All will be confusion in our ideas, if we do not perceive this difference. Our growth in grace will be impeded, and our consolation will be obstructed and diminished. Sanctification differs from regeneration, only as the progress of a thing differs from its commencement. Regeneration is the *birth* of the child of God : sanctification is his *growth*—in one the principle of spiritual life is imparted, in the other it is developed and exercised.

There is another distinction necessary to be observed, and that is, the difference between sanctification and the common morality of life. There are many persons who are very amiable in their dispositions, very just in their transactions, very excellent in all their social relations, very lovely in their general character : but who at the same time, whatever esteem and affection they may conciliate, are not in a state of sanctification. They have never been convinced of sin—have never exercised faith in Christ—have never been born of the Spirit—have never been brought to love God. All this loveliness of character is but the beautiful wild flower in the wilderness of unrenewed humanity. There can be no true holiness apart from the principle of supreme love to God. Till this is implanted in the soul, we are under the dominion of supreme selfishness : and all these excellences may be traced up to self : God's law is not obeyed : God's glory is not sought, because God himself is not loved. There is, there can be no holiness, whatever there may be of what is called morality, if there be no love to God. Can that be holiness to the Lord, in which God's authority is not distinctly recognized ; nor submis-

sion to his will professed ; nor his glory sought ? In such a case, the very principle of holiness is wanting. And a melancholy spectacle it is to see so much general excellence of character as we sometimes witness, all fruitless as regards another world, to its possessor, for want of that Divine principle which transmutes all this apparently beautiful morality into true religion.

Sanctification, then, is holiness ; or that supreme love to God, and just love to man, which is required by the law of God. It is, as we have said, the development and continued energy and exercise of the Divine life implanted in the soul by regeneration. If we described it in theological phraseology, we should say it is—a dying more and more unto sin, and a living more and more unto righteousness : it is advancing in the Divine life : it is the mortification of our inbred corruptions : it is the investing of our character with the beauties of holiness : it is becoming more and more like God in his moral character. All these are instructive and impressive descriptions of our sanctification ; but still more so are the representations given of it in the Word of God. It is “the law of God written on the heart,” —the “well of water springing up into everlasting life,” —“bearing much fruit,”—“being crucified with Christ,” —“being dead with Christ,”—“living unto God,” —“walking in newness of life,” —“walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,”—“mortifying our members which are upon the earth,”—“not being conformed to this world, but being transformed by the renewing of our mind,” —“running the christian race with patience, laying aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us,” —“working out our salvation with fear and trembling,” —“following after charity,”—“being changed into the image of God, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the

Lord,"—"cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God,"—"walking in the Spirit,"—"being filled with all the fulness of God,"—"abounding in love more and more, being filled with the fruits of righteousness,"—"being fruitful in every good work,"—"being blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke,"—"having our hearts established unblameable in holiness,"—"sanctified wholly,"—"being perfect in every good work,"—"being holy, as God is holy,"—"growing in grace."

All these passages, and innumerable others, describe the work of sanctification: and O, what a work! It is almost enough to terrify us to consider what we have to do, and how defectively we do it. In reading over these passages of sacred Scripture, we are ready to exclaim, "Who then can be saved," for "who is sufficient for these things?" And it is in reference to these it is said, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."—1 Thess. iv, 3. "He of God is made unto us sanctification."—1 Cor. i, 30. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."—Heb. xii, 14.

In sanctification there is a Divine agency and a human instrumentality—the agency is the work of the Spirit of God—hence the expressions, "Sanctification of the Spirit,"—2 Thess. ii, 13; 1 Peter, i, 2. "Born of the Spirit,"—"living in the Spirit,"—"walking in the Spirit,"—"led by the Spirit,"—"sealed by the Spirit." To quote more passages would be unnecessary. The whole work of religion in the human soul is Divine. Every holy perception, inclination, affection, volition, is from God. Our conservation in holiness is as much a work of the Divine Spirit as our conversion. It is he that "worketh in us to will and to do according to his good pleasure." It is he

that in a way we cannot wholly comprehend, but which from our own consciousness we know is in no sense at variance with the laws of our mental economy or our freedom of choice and action, makes us holy.

Not however independently of means and instrumentality. If the Spirit is the agent, the truth, as it is in Jesus, is the instrumental means of our sanctification. Holiness is not a physical, but a moral creation; and the influence which imparts it is quite different from that physical power which moves, governs, and rules the material creation. The Divine power which regenerates and sanctifies the soul is of a kind peculiar to this work. It is, if we may so speak, a Divine, efficient, moral suasion: but the *modus operandi* is beyond our penetration. Frequent reference is made to the truth as the instrument of holiness. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth."—John xvii. 17. So prayed the Saviour of the world for his apostles: in which petition he recognises at once the instrumentality of truth, and the efficient agency of God. So in another place, "Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you."—John xv. 3. To this effect are the words of the apostle, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification, and belief of the truth."—2 Thess. ii. 13. "The Word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe."—1 Thess. ii. 13. "Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth."—James i. 18. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, . . . being born again, not of corruptible seed . . . by the Word of God."—1 Peter i. 22, 23. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."—John vi. 63. In all these passages, and many more might have been selected, the truth is most clearly and positively

stated to be the means of our sanctification. Now it is the work of the Spirit to cause this truth to be so attended to by the judgment, so understood in a peculiar and spiritual manner, and so felt, as to move the will of man to choose and pursue holiness and to reject sin. We are not to imagine that the work of the Spirit annihilates the faculties, or destroys the freedom of the soul, but guides and directs these faculties by the spiritual light which he introduces. It is man's own act to repent, to believe, to love, to obey, according to the truth set before the mind ; but to this it is led by the Spirit of God.

We now come very clearly to see the office of faith in sanctification. In the Acts of the Apostles we have these two expressions : " Purifying their hearts by faith."—Chap. xv, 9 : " That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, by faith that is in me."—Chap. xxvi, 18. What in one place is called " sanctified," is in the other called " purified ;" sustaining what has been said, that sanctification means purifying. It will be our business now to make it obvious that faith has a work to perform in sanctification, as necessary and as important as in justification.

There are some writers who represent the system of faith, as it is set forth by the evangelical divines, as tending to weaken the obligations to holiness. They are able to understand how the *law*, with its precepts and penalties, should operate in keeping men from sin ; but they do not see how the *gospel*, with its promises and privileges, should conduce to the same end ; forgetting, or indeed not understanding, what the apostle saith, that " by faith we establish the law."

Then there are others, who most willingly consent to the doctrine of full justification through the righteousness

of Christ ; but who, while they see pretty clearly the business of faith in this act of God's grace, do not see as clearly its work in sanctification. This it will be our business now to unfold.

1. Faith sanctifies by the respect which it pays to the whole Word of God.

It must be borne in mind, as I have just said, that the work of sanctification is carried on by the instrumentality of the truth. The truth presents all those laws to be obeyed, in obedience to which sanctification consists—all those sins to be avoided which are opposed to it—all those motives to obey the one and avoid the other, which in the hand of the Spirit induce it—together with numerous examples of iniquity on the one hand, and righteousness on the other, which attract to holiness and repel from sin.

It is impossible not to be struck with the adaptation of the Bible to produce holiness. Every part of it—its precepts, threatenings, promises, examples—all are adapted to make men holy. It is a testimony *against* sin, and *for* righteousness. Some writers, in their misguided zeal for the work of the Spirit, have disparaged not only the Bible, but God's wisdom in employing it as his great moral instrument for the salvation of man, by affirming that there is no more adaptation in the Bible to convert the sinner, than in the wind which blew upon the valley of dry bones to awaken the dead. They resolve the whole work of conversion into an arbitrary operation of God, irrespective of all means. This is to contradict the Word of God, which speaks of conversion and sanctification being carried on by the truth, and entirely to exclude the work of faith in this important business. It is by an intelligent understanding, and a cordial belief, of the truth, that it is made to bear upon the heart, conscience, and life.

A man reads his Bible, in which, if he believe it, he sees the nature, the necessity, the means and motives of holiness; and it is by believing these things, they become obligatory upon the conscience. Sanctification is not a series of blind impulses in the mind—of unmeaning raptures of the soul, or of mystic silence; but of intelligent acts of conformity to the will of God, as that will is made known in his Word; and it is only by knowing and believing the Word that this can be achieved. How powerfully sometimes is a single precept, threatening, promise, or example of the Scripture impressed upon the mind, in the way of deterring from sin or urging to holiness. But it is the firm belief that it is the Word of God which gives it all its power.

2. Faith sanctifies by the direct and prevailing regard it has to the work of Christ, as set forth in the Word of God. Sanctifying belief, like that which justifies, while it takes in the whole field of revelation, dwells especially on the scenes of Calvary. Thither it is drawn by an irresistible attraction—there it dwells with an intense delight—from thence it derives its sources of consolation, and motives to obedience. Yes, its great object is a crucified Saviour. Who does not add his “Amen,” to the words of Watts:

“O, the sweet wonders of that cross,
Where God the Saviour loved and died!
Her noblest life my spirit draws,
From his dear wounds and bleeding side.”

Now the death of Christ, intelligently apprehended, operates in three ways for our sanctification.

—It presents the strongest motives to holiness by setting forth in the most vivid and striking manner, the holiness and justice of God, and his determination to punish transgression; the immutable authority of the Divine law;

the evil nature of sin ; and the fearfulness of falling into the hands of the living God. Not all the judgments God ever inflicted, nor all the threatenings he ever denounced, give such an impressive warning against sin and admonition to righteousness, as the death of Christ. The torments of the bottomless pit are not so awful a demonstration of God's hatred of sin as the agonies of the cross.

—There is another way in which the death of Christ apprehended by faith, tends to holiness, and that is by opening a medium by which our obedience to God can be accepted by him. Dr. Chalmers, in a Sermon, upon "The Purifying Influence of the Christian Faith," has set this in a clear and interesting point of view. "It first takes away a wall of partition, which, in the case of every man who has not received this doctrine, lies across the path of his obedience at the very commencement. So long as I think that it is quite impossible for me so to run as to obtain, I will not move a single footstep. Under the burden of a hopeless controversy between me and God, I feel as it were weighed down to the inactivity of despair. I live without hope ; and so long as I do so, I live without God in the world. And besides, he, while the object of my terror, is also the object of my aversion. The helpless necessity under which I labour, so long as the question of my guilt remains unsettled, is to dread the Being whom I am commanded to love. I may occasionally cast a feeble regard towards that distant and inaccessible Lawgiver ; but so long as I view him shrouded in the darkness of frowning majesty, I can place in him no trust, and I can bear towards him no filial tenderness. I may occasionally consult the requirements of his law ; but when I look to the uncanceled sentence that is against me, I can never tread, with hopeful or assured footsteps, on the career of

obedience. But let me look unto Christ lifted up for our offences ; and see the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, and which was contrary unto us, nailed to his cross, and there blotted out, and taken out of the way—and then I see the barrier in question levelled with the ground. I now behold the way of repentance cleared of the obstructions, by which it was aforetime rendered utterly impassable. This is the will of God, even your sanctification, may be sounded a thousand times in the ear of an unbeliever, and leave him as immoveable as it found him ; because, while under a sense of unexpiated guilt, he sees a mighty parapet before him, which he cannot scale. But if the same words be sounded in the ears of a believer, they will put him into motion. For to him the parapet is opened up, and the rough way is made smooth, and the mountain and the hill are brought low, and the valley of separation is filled, and he is made to see the salvation of God. The path of obedience is made level before him, and he enters it with the inspiration of a new and invigorating principle ; and that love to God, which the consciousness of guilt will ever keep at a distance from the heart, now takes up the room of this terrifying, and paralyzing, and alienating sentiment ; and the reception of this doctrine of atonement is just as much the turning point of a new character, as it is the turning point of a new hope ; and it is the very point, in the history of every human soul, at which the alacrity of gospel obedience takes its commencement, as well as the cheerfulness of gospel anticipations. Till this doctrine be believed, there is no attempt at obedience at all ; or else, it is such an obedience as is totally unanimated by the life and the love of real godliness. And it is not till this doctrine has taken possession of the mind, that any man

can take up the language of the Psalmist, and say, 'Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds.' "

—In the death of Christ we see the most perfect model of holiness! He was sinless to the end, and gave in his death the most wonderful instance of cheerful, willing, and suffering obedience to the will of God, the universe ever witnessed! How stupendous an act of submission was it, that he who was in the form of God, should humble himself in the form of a servant to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. How much of our sanctification consists of obedience. What can *we* refuse to do in this way after we have seen what Christ has done?

—Then the death of Christ supplies the most powerful appeals to our gratitude and love. What can be so mighty in moving us as these states of mind! What will not fervent love and intense gratitude do! What sin will not a soul abandon—what duty will it not perform that is under the constraining influence of the love of Christ! Here was the apostle's motive to holiness: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."—Gal. ii, 20.

3. Faith operates on our sanctification, by the regard it bears, the credit it gives, to the promised aid of the Holy Spirit. We have already shown that it is by his agency the whole work of grace is carried on in the soul. But what assures us that we shall have the Spirit? What encourages us to expect this necessary aid? The numerous promises of the Word of God. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good

things to them that ask him? Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”—Matt. vii, 11, 7. This is an absolute promise to be believed; and it is only one of many which might be quoted in which God engages to bestow his sanctifying grace. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature.”—2 Peter i, 4. Now, the believer credits these promises; and believing, receives the gift of the Spirit. The grace is in the promise, so to speak; and it is the work of faith to draw it out from thence into the soul. It produces that waiting, dependent, expectant frame, to which God delights to give the blessing. It opens the soul to the coming blessing.

4. Faith unites the soul vitally to Christ, and thus draws from him all that grace which is in him for the spiritual welfare of his church. The true believer is a branch of the living vine.—John xv, 1. A member of the body of which Christ is the Divine Head.—Ephes. 1, 23. As the branch derives its sap from the tree, and the member its life from the head, so the believer derives all sanctifying grace from Christ. All our life of sanctification, as well as of justification, is in him. “It hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell, that out of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace.” It is only as we abide in him, look to him, depend on him, we can have any measure of holiness. “In the Lord have we righteousness and strength.” “Who of God is made unto us not only wisdom, and righteousness, but sanctification, and redemption.”—1 Cor. i, 30. This, in my opinion, is the design of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, viewed in connection with the beginning of the eighth, to show that sanctification can no more be obtained

by the law than justification : and that the former is as much in Christ for us as the latter.

5. But, lastly, faith operates in sanctification by the regard it bears to the future world, as set forth before us in the Word of God. That world is represented as consisting of two states,—heaven for the righteous, and hell for the wicked. These are believed by the real Christian. In reference to the former, his “faith is the confidence of things hoped for : the conviction of things not seen.” He believes the reality, the certainty, the glory of the heavenly state, and knowing that it is prepared only for those who by holiness are prepared for it ; he strives after that “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” He looks up to the portals of immortality, and sees this solemn inscription, “And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie : but they only have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates of the city, who do his commandments.” Reading this, he says, “I must be sanctified, or renounce all hope of heaven.” Filled with this conviction he meets the fiercest temptation, with some such words as these—

“In vain the world accosts my ear,
And tempts my heart anew,
I cannot buy your bliss so dear,
Nor part with heaven for you.”

Nor is this all, the very representation which the Scriptures give of heaven, assists the work of sanctification. The heaven of the Bible is not a Roman elysium, a Mahomedan Paradise of sensual delights, a New Jerusalem transfer of earth to the skies : it is a *holy* world, a state of moral perfection, a condition of existence from which sin is for ever excluded : where the soul is wrought

to a perfect conformity in thought, affection, and volition, to the image of God. The place is holy—the society is holy—the occupation is holy—it is, in short, the region of unsullied purity. It is, therefore, so represented to us, that it is impossible to contemplate it devoutly—to desire it longfully—to prepare for it truly—without growing holy. Every glance of the eye at its pearly gates—its gold paved streets—its nightless day—its sinless inhabitants—inflames the mind with a desire after greater sanctification, as the only meetness for all its glories. Hence it is said, “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”—1 John iii, 3. Men’s characters are, if not actually formed, yet sustained and consolidated by the nature and quality of their hopes: so is the Christian’s.

And then turn to the dreadful reverse—the awful, horrid contrast—the dark world of hell. That orb of evil which draws all sin to itself. Scripture declares that unrepented, unmortified, unforsaken sin, shall sink the transgressor to those regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where neither peace nor hope can ever dwell. “The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”—Rev. xxi, 8. Dreadful description, and not more dreadful than true! Faith sees and trembles. It stands afar off, and hearing “the wailing and gnashing of teeth,” and seeing “the smoke of their torment ascending up for ever and ever,” is filled with holy awe, and is prepared to pluck out a right eye, and to cut off a right hand or right foot, rather than be cast into that place, “where their worm dieth not, and their fire is never quenched.”—Mark ix, 44. Hell is as

truly an object of Christian belief as heaven, and while the contemplation of the latter has a direct tendency to draw us to holiness, the former has a tendency no less direct, to drive us from sin.

Let us now meditate on the various inferences which this subject suggests to us.

1. It is scarcely necessary to insist upon the indispensable necessity of holiness to entitle us to the character of a true believer. We are not, cannot be, Christians, if we are not changed in our moral nature from sin to holiness. Holiness was the image of God in which man was created in the beginning—the image which he lost by the fall—and to restore which to our nature was the design of the whole scheme of redemption. It is a mistake to suppose the chief end of Christ's death was to save us from hell. "He died to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."—Titus ii, 14. Without a new and holy nature, from which shall emanate the fruits of righteousness in our character and conduct, we can be Christians only in name. Sanctification is as essential to salvation as justification, indeed it is a part of it. We must be born again, which is the starting point of sanctification; and we must grow in holiness, as the evolutions and energies of the new life implanted by regeneration. Without sanctification, whatever amiable and lovely qualities of a general kind we may possess, we are still the children of wrath—the enemies of God—the subjects of unrenewed corruption—the heirs of perdition—and going on to everlasting destruction. An unholy man cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The laws of heaven forbid his entrance into that state: could *he* enter, its blessed inhabitants would retire from him, as the healthy inhabitants of a town would shrink from a

person who had come among them infected with the plague. He would find nothing in heaven to suit his taste ; no one to associate with him : like a person under fever, he would be unable to relish a single viand at the heavenly feast, and recoil by a kind of moral hydrophobia from the water of the fountain of life. But the unsanctified can gain no entrance into that blessed world : and any expectation he may entertain of it, is but as the hope of the hypocrite, which will perish in the day when God taketh away his soul ; and he will be doomed to the bitterness of disappointment in that hour when he expected to rise to the felicities of fruition.

2. It is of immense consequence for professors to examine themselves to ascertain if they are truly sanctified. Profession is very common—and so is self-delusion. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name have cast out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”—Matt. vii, 21-23. These are words awful enough to fill the whole church with anxiety and alarm. How prevalent, according to this passage, is self-deception ! *Many* will say. How far it may be carried—even to the judgment seat ! How unlikely are the subjects of it—professors, preachers, workers of miracles ! I tremble as I write—I tremble for multitudes all around. Never, no never, were professors more in danger of self-deception than in this age. Never did a greater number fall into the danger. If the standard of true religion be the New Testament, then no small proportion of the members of all

our churches cannot be true Christians, but are merely nominalists, evangelical formalists, and pharisees. Let any one study the Bible description of holiness—the setting forth of sanctification as we find it in our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount—the sixth, eighth, and twelfth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans—the thirteenth of the first Epistle to the Corinthians—the third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians and Philippians—and the address of our Lord to the seven churches in Asia, in the book of the Revelation—and say if our churches will stand this test. Do we see the work of sanctification in their spirit, character, and conduct? Is holiness to the Lord inscribed upon them? Are they shining as lights in the world, so that men see their good works? Verily, I trow not. The description of the church of Sardis is that which characterises the state of the christian world in this day, and a fearful one it is :—“ *Thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead.*”

Let the call for examination then, be sounded forth. Let Christians try themselves on the subject of sanctification. Let them go into their closet in solemn seriousness, and with the Bible open and God’s omniscient eye upon them, ask the question, “Is holiness my desire—my intense desire;—my pursuit—my steady, vigorous, earnest pursuit? Do I subject all my wishes—my plans—my tastes—my purposes—to this? Do I deliberately *will to* be holy—not satisfying myself with vague desires? Do I hate sin as sin, and not merely because of its consequences? Do I resist it in thought, feeling, and desire? Do I mortify every evil corruption of my heart; and am I diligently employed in digging up its roots in the soul, as well as lopping its branches in the conduct? Am I striving after purity of heart? Is my aim to be freed from *all*

sin as well as *some*; or am I endeavouring to atone for the retention of some sins I value, by the surrender of others I am not strongly tempted to commit? Am I satisfied to be as holy as others; or am I striving to be as holy as God requires? Do I mourn over every degree of imperfection; and am I watching and praying against it? Am I striving after perfection—really endeavouring to be cleansed ‘from *all* filthiness of flesh and spirit?’ Do I feel that holiness is my very calling, and do I know that I am following it up as such?”

Ah, this is the test, and this the manner of applying it; and so applied, how many must be cut off from the true christian hope. And yet is there any thing here but what the Word of God contains? If we fall under conviction that we are not yet sanctified, let us not put aside the matter as a thing that, however it may be regretted, cannot be helped; and say, “If I am wrong, how many are in the same condition.” True. But will that help *you*? Is it any consolation to perish in a crowd? Will it comfort you to go down to the pit with a multitude?

3. Let the true Christian pant after holiness. Believer, you are justified, and can never be more so than you now are. *That* work of grace is perfected, and what is perfect cannot be improved. There are no degrees in justification. “It is finished.” Blessed thought! You *are* “accepted in the beloved.” Your sanctification is the evidence of this. But sanctification *has* degrees. You “have not attained, neither are you already perfect. Forgetting the things which are behind, reach forward unto those which are before.” Dwell upon the value, the blessedness of holiness—the comfort of purity—the peace of righteousness—the happiness of purity. In some respects sanctification is a greater blessing than justification.

Justification frees from punishment; but sanctification from the sin that deserves it. Justification exempts from hell; but sanctification gives us the temper of heaven. Justification gives the title to life; sanctification the life itself. Justification restores us to the favour of God; sanctification restores to us the image of God, without which even his favour would be no benefit. Justification is only the means, of which sanctification is the end; for our "conscience is purged from dead works, that we might serve the living and true God." Justification is a relative perfection; sanctification a personal one, and personal changes are above relative ones. Justification has nothing in God to which it is like; but sanctification is his very image. Justification is the blessing of a fallen sinner; holiness the blessing of creatures that have never sinned. Justification is the pledge of glory; sanctification its earnest. Justification is a benefit to the individual who possesses it; being one of those secret transactions which take place within the veil of heaven, and in the chambers of the heart; but sanctification is a social blessing; the change which it involves goes on in public, and by the power of example and influence, benefits those who witness it.

Besides all this, holiness is the end of all God's dealings towards us in grace and providence. If he chose us from eternity, it is that we might be holy. If he call us in time, it is to holiness. If he gave Christ to die for us, it is to purify us from all iniquity. If he pours out the Spirit, it is to sanctify us. If he gave us the Scriptures, it is that by them we might be made holy. If he chastise us by affliction, it is "that we might be partakers of his holiness." It runs through all his designs and all his plans, to carry on our sanctification.

Christians, see your work—your duty—your privilege. Grow in grace, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.”—1 Thess. iv, 5. Be it your will also. You are not yet perfect. Seek to be so. Go on unto perfection. It is an apostolic command. Let nothing less satisfy you. It is your unquestionable duty to seek after it. You are not under the law for justification, but you are for sanctification; and that law demands *perfect* love—*perfect* obedience. Your justification by the gospel has not released you from sanctification by conformity to the law. The law tolerates no sin, but condemns all. To suppose that the law does not demand perfect obedience, is to say that it allows you to sin a little. To affirm that the gospel has abolished the law, in its demands of perfect obedience, is to contradict the apostle, who says, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.”—Rom. iii, 31. The law, which is the distant echo of God’s own voice, is ever saying to you, “Holier, holier, still.” Be it your reply, “Yes, Lord, holier, holier, still.” Desire—yea, long—yea, pant after more intense holiness. *Your own comfort requires it.* What troubles you like sin? What is your greatest disquiet, but your low degrees of holiness? The “work of righteousness is peace; the fruit of righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever.” “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.”—2 Cor. i, 12. “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, but if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.”—1 John iii, 20, 21. *God’s glory requires it*—He is honoured by his people’s conformity to his image. Holiness

is the reflection of his own bright rays of moral excellence from his people's character. *Religion gains credit by it.* Oh, what would be the commanding power of religion in our world, if all professing Christians were but seen to be eminent in sanctification and striving after perfect holiness—devout towards God—just towards man—lovely in every social virtue—chaste, truthful, temperate and moderate in all things: in whom the beauties of holiness would be seen in all their attractions. How would the people of the world be struck when they saw a higher morality than their own dead virtue, animated by piety, and instinct with a divine and spiritual life. They might not love and imitate it, but they would admire it, and like Satan before the seraph stand abashed, and feel how awful goodness is. The sneers and sarcasms against the saints would cease, when the saintly excellences shone forth in all their splendour. Such forms of virtue would appear too sacred for contempt. It is the more eminent sanctification of the church that is wanted for the conversion of the world: and a holier church would make a holier world, and we cannot expect a holier world till we have a holier church.

But what are the means of obtaining greater sanctification?

We must feel we need it, which is not generally the case. Christians are lamentably content to remain as they are. Under the fatal opiate that there is no perfection in this world, they are reconciling themselves to all kinds and all degrees of imperfections. They are quite satisfied with a perfect justification, without seeking after a perfect sanctification. Next to feeling our need, we must *cherish an intense desire after it*: and this desire must come out in the form of a deliberate purpose and fixed resolution. "I must, and God helping me, I WILL be more holy," should

be the determination of every believer. Men are afraid to bind themselves with a deliberate resolve, but they ought to do so. They will never be more holy till they resolve to be so. This thing will not come by wishing—but only by willing.

There must be *the daily, and diligent, and prayerful study of the Scriptures*. This is the divinely appointed means of sanctification. We must read the Word, not out of a mere superstitious reverence for the Bible, as a book that ought to be read so much of it every day, but without any distinct object in perusing it, except it be to avoid the reproaches of conscience for *not* reading it : not simply to be acquainted with its contents, and to admire its sublimities of doctrine, or its beauties of poetry : not merely to furnish ourselves with the weapons of controversy ; no, nor even to draw forth the waters of consolation—but to be made holy. We should approach the Bible with this prayer upon our lips, and going forth from the heart, “Sanctify me by thy truth.” There is a spirit, as well as letter of holiness pervading the Word of God : it is redolent with sanctity : an atmosphere of holiness surrounds it : and it is this we should endeavour to inhale in coming to its divine pages. If it does not make us holy, it does nothing for us effectually, and it is only as we are sanctified, we enter into God’s design in giving us the volume.

Nor must we omit *the exercise of our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*. We need as much to regard Christ in our sanctification as in our justification. There is perpetual allusion to this in the New Testament. Christ, as a *teacher*, has shown us by precept what sanctification is, in his Sermon upon the Mount. As an *example*, he has exhibited to us his own conduct ; he was an embodiment of holiness—a living pattern of purity. As our

atonement, he has made holiness attainable by us through the gift of the Divine Spirit conferred upon us, a fruit of his mediation. By our *union with him* by faith, we derive the virtues and efficacy of his mediation. Hence, we are crucified with Christ—buried with Christ—quickened with Christ—risen with Christ—and walk in newness of life with Christ. On him our faith must be fixed, to derive from him all that is necessary for our new and spiritual existence.

And if we would increase in sanctification, *we must be much in prayer* for the influence of the Divine Spirit. Sanctification, as we have already shown, is his work; but for this work, he will be importuned by us in prayer. No man can be eminently holy, but by being much in his closet; for “this thing goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting.” In praying for the Spirit, we should understand what we ask—that we want to have our corruptions, those we have indulged and cherished, mortified; that we want to have right eyes plucked out, and right hands cut off. This is what we mean by being sanctified. Many people pray for the Spirit to make them holy; but then they use the term holy in the most vague and indeterminate sense, forgetting that holiness means the putting away of those very sins they love. No man prays with sincerity for Divine help in sanctification, who does not mean that he wants help to put away every sin he has, even the dearest or most gainful; and not only the greatest but the least. To ask God to sanctify us, and yet not to determine to renounce the sins we know we are committing, is an awful mockery of God. When a worldly-minded professor prays to be sanctified, he means if he mean any thing, that he has really determined to put away his worldly-mindedness, and to become spiritual. When

a passionate, or revengeful, or malicious professor prays for sanctification, he means that he has resolved to alter and improve his temper, and that he wants the Spirit to assist him. So if the covetous prays for sanctification, he means that he has resolved to put away his love of money, and is really desirous that God would assist him to do so. Oh, the insincerity and hypocrisy of multitudes in praying for the Spirit to make them holy. They do not want to be sanctified, and in asking for it, they do but add hypocrisy to all their other sins.

But where the heart is sincere, and the believer really ~~desires~~ to be made holy, where it can honestly say - -

“ Return, O holy dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest '
I hate the sins that make thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast

“ The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee ”

In that case, the Spirit shall be granted, provided the blessing be asked in faith. Such a soul, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and beseeching Divine help with fervour, and expecting to receive it, shall grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing God has more frequently promised to bestow—nothing he is more willing to bestow—nothing he is more glorified in bestowing—than his Holy Spirit to those who ask it for sanctification.

CHAPTER IV.

THE JOY OF FAITH.

IN the opening of this chapter, we again look at Adam, as he was when he came from the hands of his Creator, and follow a similar train of remark in reference to his felicity, to that which commenced the last, in reference to his holiness. Man was made for happiness, and was perfectly happy at his creation. The garden of Eden without, was but an emblem of the Paradise in his soul. The flowers which exhibited their beauties and emitted their fragrance; the fruits which blushed in ruddy maturity on every tree; the birds which carolled in every bower, and sent forth such music as the ear of untainted purity delighted to listen to; and the glorious sun gilding the whole scene with splendour—were all but the outward and visible signs of the joy, and peace, and loveliness which reigned in the hearts of the tenants of the place. The image of God was impressed upon their souls, and it was accompanied with a peace that passeth understanding and a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Sin entered, and all was changed. The tear of sorrow suffused the eye—the cloud of care gathered on the brow—the pang of anguish rent the heart—the groan of distress was heaved from the labouring breast—and it seemed as if the daylight of joy had faded for ever from our world amidst the gloom of rayless night. But mercy abandoned not our earth. In the first promise made to the guilty pair on the very spot

of their transgression, a streak of light appeared on the darkened horizon; under the patriarchal age the day dawned; at the giving of the typical dispensation from Mount Sinai, the morning star appeared amidst the clouds of Sinai; more and more ruddy the sky appeared during the prophetic dispensation; till at last the Sun of Righteousness arose at the advent of the Saviour, with healing in his wings; and brought back again—the peace that passeth understanding and the joy unspeakable. And once more our dark disordered world is the abode of happiness.

The Bible everywhere speaks of the children of God as a joyful people. To be sure it does—how should it be otherwise? *The children of God!* The very expression implies it. Is it not every way to be expected that the children of God should be happy? If the children of wise, kind, wealthy parents upon earth may be supposed to be joyful, how much more the children of God, whose infinitely glorious attributes stand all engaged to make *them* blessed?

Every thing bears out the assertion that the Word of God declares believers to be joyful. *Predictions* do it.—“Men shall be blessed in him, yea all nations shall call him blessed.” “Great shall be the peace of thy children.” “Thus saith the Lord, behold I will extend peace to her like a river.” *Descriptions* do it.—“Blessed are the people whom thou choosest.” “Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven.” “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.” “Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” “In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” *Exhortations* do it.—“Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create.” “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice.” *Examples* do it.—“Then they that gladly

received the Word were baptized, and did eat their meat with gladness." "There was great joy in that city." "And he went on his way rejoicing." "He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." "Ye received the Word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost."

Thus the uniform representation of the Bible is that the Lord's people are the subjects of joy and peace; and it is equally plain as to the means by which this is produced. This then is the subject of the present chapter—spiritual joy is produced by faith.

Now, our first business must be to describe the nature of spiritual joy. Many mistakes are made upon this subject which it will be necessary to point out.

It is not necessary that there should be highly excited raptures, and lofty ecstasies of soul. These, in some cases, are mere animal excitement, or the workings of imagination. Persons of no religion, or of false religion, have sometimes, in consequence of their physical temperament, been as highly elevated as others have been depressed. There is no question but that, owing to the mysteriously close connection between body and soul, much of what by an infelicitous, yet well-understood phrase, is called "sensible comfort," is owing to physical organization, or external influences working upon it. No doubt there have been, and are, and not unfrequently, instances in which the view of spiritual things is so clear, and the faith so strong, that the soul of the believer is raised to an extraordinary elevation of spiritual delight. Men of sober judgment, such as the pious Halyburton, the great John Howe, and Dr. Payson, have recorded their experience on this subject, and told us that their joy on some occasions rose to ecstasies of delight so intense, that it seemed as if heaven were begun upon earth. Such elevations of holy joy

are usually granted to the more eminent of God's children, and are reserved for them, either at the close of life, or in the times of great trial. These, therefore, are not common occurrences: and no doubt a great deal of what passes under the notion of religious rapture, is mere animal excitement,—the fervours of a glowing imagination kindled up by a live coal from the altar of enthusiasm. None should be discouraged because they are strangers to such a state of mind. The stony ground hearers had joy of this kind, but it soon vanished. The joy of faith is usually of a much more sober character.

So neither is this joy to be confounded with a good flow of natural cheerfulness. Here again there is much in physical organization. Some persons are blessed with such a happy temperament that they are nearly always buoyant and gladsome. This, of course, is sometimes the case with believers as well as others, and their easy, light-some temper falling in with religion, gives them the appearance and secures for them the character of "happy Christians." And so indeed they are—but a great part of the joy which they experience is to be set down not to their religion, but to their constitution. Such a constitution is itself a blessing to be thankful for, but it is not piety.

Nor does spiritual joy mean that delight which is experienced under exciting sermons, and the public means, of grace, but which is confined almost, if not entirely, to these things. The eloquence of the preacher, the power of music over the feelings, and the exhilarating effect of a large congregation, may produce very lively and pleasant emotions, and many persons think and speak of the high enjoyment they have had in religious exercises. But then all their enjoyment is confined to these engagements. At

home, and in the habitual frame of their minds, they know nothing at all of pure spiritual enjoyment; and even that which they experienced in the house of God, or in the religious circle, is not the effect of truth perceived, believed, and felt, but of circumstances. Their attachment is not to the gospel, but to some favourite preacher, or preachers, and their enjoyment is in hearing *them* preach, and not in the gospel which is their theme. The joy of faith, though no doubt aided by the means of grace, is not dependent upon them, nor confined to them: and even while they last, it is not the eloquence of the preacher that produces it, but the doctrine which he exhibits. If you see some persons listening to their favourites, or hear them talking about them, you would imagine they were lifted up to heaven upon earth; but if you look at them at other times, you would see them without a gleam of spiritual joy; they are of the earth, earthly.

Spiritual joy is not worldly mirth and merriment carried into a religious profession. By many worldly-minded professors we are told, when reproving them for their sinful conformity to the customs and amusements of the age, "That religious people ought to be cheerful and not gloomy, and that a light and social temper is the best way to win the ungodly to religion." So indeed they ought to be cheerful, but then it should be in a way compatible with their profession. Nothing spectral, sepulchral, ascetic, morose, should be seen in them. A Christian is a child of light, an heir of glory, a son of God, born from above, and travelling to heaven, and should appear to be sustaining the ills of time by the assured hope of a happy eternity. He should have inscribed upon his countenance as by sunbeams from Paradise, the word "happiness." But then his joy must be seen to be an emanation from his religion.

This must be the impression which *he* should produce on those who see him, "Religion is bliss." He must draw men to his own crystal stream of happiness, not by partaking of the puddle with which *they* are endeavouring to satisfy their thirst, but by inviting them to the wells of salvation. Worldly amusements, and the mirth and the merriment they yield, are utterly uncongenial with the joy of faith.

What then is this joy? It is that cessation of painful solicitude, and apprehension of Divine displeasure, which is awakened by a sense of sin, and which is relieved by believing in our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is its first step—that gladsome state of mind which is the result of really crediting the glad tidings of pardon and eternal life by the gospel—that calm, peaceful, tranquil state of the conscience, which has been freed from a sense of unpardoned guilt—that inward satisfaction and pleasure which are the result of conscious reconciliation with God. There may be no rapturous delight, but there is a sweet serenity of mind, the very opposite of that perturbed and apprehensive state which is produced by the fear of Divine wrath. The *object* of this joy, or that which produces it, is the gospel, or the glad tidings of salvation—hence it is a rational joy, being produced by something joyful in itself: the *cause* of this joy is our faith, believing this joyful object—hence it is not a groundless feeling: the *nature* of this joy is a cessation of previous alarm and distress, coupled with a peaceful hope of all the blessings of salvation—hence it is unquestionably a happy state of mind.

But we now go on to consider how faith produces this joy, or how, as the apostle says, we come to have "joy and peace *in believing*."

There can be no mystery here. The subject is patent

to all persons. In the common affairs of life, he that believeth glad tidings concerning himself, must be made glad by them. If a man is in mortal sickness, and one come into his room with a medicine, and the assurance it will cure him—if he believes the glad tidings, he will be *made* glad at once. If he be in debt without means of payment, and one come and assure him he will pay all he owes; if he believes these glad tidings, he will be instantly made glad. If he be condemned to die, and one come and tell him he is reprieved,—if he believes these glad tidings, he will instantly be made glad. Now all this is very plain—glad tidings make glad the heart which really believes them. In all these cases, the joy is not the joy of doing, for these persons are supposed to do nothing, and can do nothing, but it is the joy of faith. The object of their gladness is not something in themselves, but something out of themselves. The cause of this joy is not what they have done, but simply believing what others have done, or will do for them.

Precisely thus is it with respect to faith in Christ; the gospel brings glad tidings of great joy, the sinner believes them, and in believing is, and of necessity must be, made glad. To see this more clearly, let us notice:—

1. What these blessings are which the Christian believes to be contained in the gospel. Are they of such a nature as to be likely to produce delight, and to justify its exercise, so that a wise and prudent man would pause and hesitate whether there is any thing here that deserves his rejoicing. No man ought to expend his joyous emotions over an unworthy object. It is the mark of childhood to be delighted with toys, and of folly to be pleased with trifles. And it is equally the mark of a stoic, a savage, or a brute, not to be made glad by immense and boundless

privileges. Take only one passage as containing a summary of christian blessings, "He of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."—1 Cor. i, 30. Here are blessings, immense, infinite, and eternal: blessings than which, Divine all-sufficiency has nothing greater to bestow, nor man any thing greater to receive: blessings before which all the objects of earth and earthly ambition fade into darkness and dwindle into insignificance: blessings which supply every want, and remove every woe that sin has introduced: blessings which provide wisdom for the ignorant—pardon for the guilty—holiness for the depraved—and a full redemption for the lost. If these are not great, there is nothing great in heaven above, or in earth beneath, and the whole world is a collection of impertinences. He who could really believe such things, and that they really are his, and not be joyful, must be an anomaly and contradiction in the universe. It would be to believe the greatest, the best, and the gladdest tidings that could be announced, and yet to receive all this without a smile.

2. It is not only the greatness, but the *certainty* of these things which is realised by a true belief. They are not cunningly devised fables—religious speculations—the works of an imagination inspired by enthusiasm—ecclesiastical legends—priestly impositions. No: but divine realities, as true as they are vast. This is the exulting language of the Christian, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day." He sees all the evidences of the truth of the gospel narrative; ranges over the whole field of proof; weighs each by itself, and feels

the cumulative force of the whole. "No, no," he exclaims, "I am not, cannot be, deceived. I have the witness in myself. I not only can adventure my one soul upon this foundation, but I could trust a thousand souls to it if I possessed them. Noah, sitting in his ark, and trusting its preservation and guidance to its Omnipotent Pilot, did not feel more secure amidst the wild uproar of the deluge, than I do in *my* ark, which is Christ. I am safe. All the attributes of God are my guarantee." This certainly is essential to enjoyment; for the greater the blessings, the greater the misery of any doubts about their reality. When the believer is giving himself up to the bliss of his state, possessions, prospects, and hopes, as a Christian; letting go his feelings to an exuberance of delight, while he plunges into the depths, and soars into the altitudes, of his spiritual mercies, what a cold chill would come over him if he suspected that all this might prove the baseless fabric of a vision. What a felicity it is that our greatest blessings are our most certain ones.

3. The believer realises his own personal interest in these blessings. They are not blessings for others only, but for *him*. He appropriates them as he is invited to do, to himself. This is the true nature of faith; and there is no true faith without it, to claim a personal interest in all that God's love has bestowed—all that Christ died to obtain—all that is promised in the Scriptures—all that heaven contains. Under every promise of spiritual blessings—every invitation to the Saviour—every prospect of eternal glory—he writes, "Mine—all mine!" "What would salvation be," he exclaims, "if it were only a vast domain belonging to others, but not to me; over which I should look, as I do over the noble mansion, park, and gardens of some rich man, but only to congratulate him

as the proprietor. The glory is, that I am myself, through God's rich grace, lord of all the vast domain. I can point to the cross and say, *my* Saviour; to the throne of the eternal, and say, *my* father; to the covenant of grace, and say, *my* charter; to the church of Christ, and say, *my* New Jerusalem; to heaven, and say, *my* home; and to eternal life, and say, *my* inheritance." Well might Luther say, "I love the Bible for these pronouns, 'mine,' and 'thine.'"

Here, then, is the operation of faith in producing joy: it believes the glad tidings of these blessings, as contained in the gospel of Christ. This is not only the means of joy and peace when first convinced of sin, and led to believe in Christ, but through every future stage of his progress, he still turns by faith to the cross as his only ground of hope. He never outlives his need of, nor his delight in, that stupendous object. It was to established believers, that the apostle said, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say rejoice."—Philip. iv, 4. Yes, *in the Lord*. Jesus is the object of Christians' joy. Christ, in the glory of his person and of his work. Christ, living on earth—dying on the cross—interceding and reigning in heaven. Christ in his first advent and his second coming. Christ, as our example and atonement. What a boundless, fathomless ocean of joy is Christ. If the material sun be so glorious in the eyes of the natural man, how much more glorious is the Sun of Righteousness to the spiritual man. To this, when the eye of flesh grows dim in death, the eye of faith turns with delight to the last. As much when one of the young men, or the fathers in Christ, as when a babe, he cries, "The cross, the cross, is all my salvation." Under every new sense of sin, and new discovery of corruption, and new views of God's justice,

he turns believingly to the gospel testimony. Hoary in years, and rich in experience, he still draws all his comfort by faith from the glad tidings of salvation.

But there is also another object of faith which fills him with joy, and that is, the heavenly inheritance. It is in reference to this that the apostle says, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—1 Peter i, 6—9. But we reserve the consideration of this for a separate chapter.

But it will be important now to observe that besides this joy of faith there is in the christian life another kind of joy, and that is the joy of holiness. True it is, that holiness is the product of faith, and thus indirectly the joy of faith and of holiness are one. But what is now meant is that holiness itself is a direct and immediate source of joy. Hence, it is said, "our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."—2 Cor. i, 12. Holiness is, and must be, happiness. God is the blessed God, because he is the holy God. Angels are happy because they are holy. Adam was happy at his creation because he was holy. The spirits of just men made perfect are happy because they are holy. There cannot be two principles more true, more impressive in themselves, or more important to be held up to public consideration than that

sin is misery and that holiness is happiness, which are a proof of a moral government of the universe. Is it not a felt truth in every believer's experience that joy and sorrow are the two scales in the balance of his soul, which are ever regulated by sin and holiness? How miserable is he when corruption prevails; how often and how agonisingly does he exclaim under these circumstances, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" Sin is itself a part of hell, and hell is but the sink of all sin and wickedness, which will finally draw all sin to itself, as its proper receptacle. And with something of the nature of hell, sin contains something of its misery. While, on the other hand, holiness is heaven, partly its nature, and partly its felicity. It is the best thing God has now to bestow upon us either in this world or in that which is to come, for it is his own image and his own bliss. Wherever there is holiness, there is something of God and something of heaven too. Heaven is continually drawing up holiness to itself, and sending down something of itself to those hearts in which holiness is now found. Let the believer, therefore, while as a sinner, he is ever drawing in the joy of faith from the cross, ever as a saint be promoting that holiness which of itself is the meetness and foretaste of heaven. "Nothing without us," says the learned Cudworth, "can make us as believers, either happy or miserable; nothing can either defile us or taint us, but what goeth out from us, what springeth up and bubbleth out of our own hearts. We have dreadful apprehensions of the flames of hell without us: we tremble and are afraid when we hear of fire and brimstone; whilst in the mean time we securely nourish within our hearts a true and living hell. The dark fire of our lusts consumeth our bowels within, and miserably scorcheth our souls, and we

are not troubled at it. We do not perceive how hell steals upon us while we live here. And, as for ~~heaven~~, we only gaze abroad, expecting that it should come in to us from without, but never look for the beginnings of it to arise within, in our own hearts." Understand then that *Christian* joy in its most perfect form springs from holiness. It is in this view of it the joy of the Lord: arising from the same causes, terminating in the same objects, and yielding the same results as that which Christ himself, who is God over all, blessed for evermore, possesses without measure. It is our sympathy with God in his infinite blessedness, our fellowship with him in happiness.

Christian joy arises also from a belief of God's exceeding great and precious promises, in all their applicability to the ever changing condition and circumstances of the believer's life. In whatever situation of want or woe, care or fear, he may be placed, if he realise only one gracious assurance of the Eternal Word, he rejoices in it as one that has found rich spoil; and feasts as upon dainty food. I have known saints, who, in deepest distress, have found a single text sufficient to fill them with unspeakable peace for days.

Now it is said, beautifully, instructively said, of this state of mind, "THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH." This exactly accords with a law of our mental economy and physical nature: sorrow, especially when it is deep, relaxes our energies, enfeebles our strength, and indisposes for action. The man oppressed with grief lies down and weeps, and turns from exertion with loathing and disgust, as a man in a fever does from food. While on the other hand joy incites to motion. When the cripple who was cured by Peter and John regained the use of his limbs, he was thrown into an ecstasy of delight, and went into the

temple walking, and leaping, and praising God. It is the sustainer of all our energies, the impulsive principle of all action and achievement in the service of our Lord. It is as oil to the wheels of obedience. If we look into the world around us, we find that joy is the achiever of almost every good or noble thing which is done under the sun. The spirit of man must work joyously, or it cannot work successfully. Who can do anything that requires labour, perseverance, and self-denial, without a buoyancy of mind? Gloom and sorrow extinguish the fire of a proper ambition, clip the wings of the aspiring soul, load the feet of activity as with thick clay, and paralyze the hands of labour. Hear the husbandman whistling at his plough, or the sower carolling as he goes, or the merry laugh of the congregated haymakers, and mark how even in their humble departments of human activity, joy helps them to bear the heat and burden of the day. So it is in spiritual things. The joy of the Lord is as far above all other kinds of joy, as holiness is better than other kinds of excellence. It not only gives life and spirit to all the mental powers and operations, but it enables the mind to throw its own inward light upon all the objects which it contemplates. The eye of the mind is like that of the body in this respect, that it imparts its own hue to all without. There is all the difference between spiritual objects when viewed in a joyous and a gloomy state of mind, that there is between a beautiful prospect surveyed in a state of visual disease and health. God with all his glorious perfections, Christ in all his offices, and heaven with all its honours and felicities, depend for the pleasure they impart, upon the state of the mind. As the orb of day is not brilliant to the melancholy man, so neither is the Sun of Righteousness to a dark and gloomy Christian.

7

Dwell upon the influence of joy on the pleasurable and profitable attendance upon the means of grace. How precious is the Bible, and how eagerly read; how delightful prayer, and how readily performed; how agreeable the sermon, and how attentively listened to; how solemn the Lord's supper, and how willingly observed in this frame of mind. The fire of devotion never languishes while fed by this fuel; nor its spirit ever tires while this is its prompter. But how soon do we grow weary of all in the absence of this. The joy of the Lord lifts up the soul to heaven and keeps it there, communing not only with the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, but with God the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant. Yea, it is this which helps to sustain all the graces of the soul in lively exercise. Springing in the first instance from faith, it re-acts upon its first principle, and strengthens that. Love *exists* apart from joy, but rarely *flourishes* apart from it. It imparts vigour to the pinions of hope, as it soars upward to its heavenly and eternal object. It gives to patience its power of endurance, and to charity its spirit of kindness and its smile of benevolence.

Who needs be informed of the power of this state of mind in the time of sorrow?—

“It gives to affliction a grace,
And reconciles man to his lot.”

We know that it is faith and hope which mainly support the soul in the dark hour of trial, but is it not by joy that faith and hope are made perfect? What said the apostle? “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” And again, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold

temptations." What trials can overpower the soul rejoicing in God? Hear its triumphant song. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."—Habakkuk iii, 17, 18. This sunshine of the soul has not only illumined the chamber of sickness, or lighted up "the dark valley of the shadow of death," but has thrown its lustre on the walls of the dark, damp dungeon of the prisoner, and has enabled the martyr to pour forth his swan-like melody on the scaffold or at the stake. In our conflict with the world, this, next to faith, and as the result of it, is our mightiest weapon. The soul filled with holy joy, will gain an easy conquest over this enemy. How dim will the lustre of the world seem, when compared with the brightness of those objects which impart a peace that passeth understanding. Rejoicing in the light of God's countenance, and in the hope of heaven, it will behold no glory in things seen and temporal, by reason of a glory that excelleth. In turning from spiritual to worldly delights, it will seem as if invited to turn from angels' food to the crumbs of beggars. The Christian knows this by experience, that his victory over the world is regulated by the enjoyment of his religion. A lukewarm love to Christ and delight in him, is sure to be attended with an ardent love to the world. While on the other hand, the bright shining of his spiritual delight puts out the flames of his worldly love and joy.

How mighty is this through all the great enterprises of christian benevolence. The miser's heart, like the ices of the pole, never melts, for he is a stranger to spiritual

joy. The worldling clutches his treasures under the influence of a joyless soul: and even the Christian finds a religion barren of pleasure, to be barren also of beneficence. Were the Church of Christ full of joy, it would also be full of liberality. A soul rejoicing in the full assurance of faith and hope, and replete with the happiness of love, must be replete with the feelings of benevolence. "The wisdom that cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable," and as a consequence, it is "full of mercy and good fruits." This is the great desideratum of the times we live in. Let us have what societies we may, and far more wealth than we possess, there cannot be the character and temper necessary for the world's conversion, till God shall send abroad the spirit of holy joy into the hearts of his people. What we want is, a more intense devotion, and a more heavenly temper. More joy would make us more self-denying and more self-sacrificing. How would our treasure flow forth, and our prayers with it, if we were but the partakers of that Divine delight which would make the gratifications derived from wealth, seem to be as nothing. How much of ministerial labour to rouse the slumbering zeal, and to call forth the reluctant and grudging liberality of Christians, might be spared, if the souls of believers were partakers of this fruit of the Spirit. This would supersede every thing else; and they would be a law to themselves. The world would soon be lifted up into this sunshine of the church, if the church really possessed it.

I cannot refrain from again presenting a long extract from an exquisitely beautiful essay on this subject by an elegant American writer: "Assuredly, we want nothing else to replenish the treasury of the Lord, and supply all requisite resources, but that the hearts of Christians should

cease to be so void of that sensible enjoyment of God, with which they should be always full. Had the church but that fountain within herself to draw from, rivers of treasure, if needed, would be at her command; and she could supply at once, the very ends of the earth, with the means of salvation. She would have a missionary in spirit in each of her sons and daughters. It is this blessedness I speak of, which looses the tongues of Christians, and makes them eloquent in teaching every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, that knowledge of God and Christ which is unto life eternal. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, said the mourning Psalmist, then will I teach transgressors thy ways. It would wing their feet for swift journeys through the length and breadth of the earth, and the glad tidings of saving love would spread from land to land, and be heard in every island, every hamlet, every dwelling on the globe, before the present generation has passed away.

“And finally, we are not sure, that if the joy of the Lord pervaded the Christian church, to the degree to which it might, and by all means should extend, the work of saving the world *would not go on of itself*, almost without labour. Certain it is, that in that condition of things, labour would itself be joy; but may we not believe, (now that Christianity is no stranger in the earth, but has for eighteen hundred years been giving infallible proof of her celestial descent, and her continued connection with the place of her origin,) that the necessity for patient and agonizing effort, if the church were in the state supposed, would be superseded?

“Heaven then would in a sense come down to earth; the tabernacle of God would be with men; and mankind would know and see the place of happiness; and would

they not also by the grace of God, through the operation of that new spectacle, be drawn thitherwards as of themselves? The nature of man still inclines him after happiness. The disappointment of six thousand years has not abated the strength of this indestructible propensity. Who can tell but that such a sight as the general church of Christ, filled with the joy of the Lord, would, under the Divine blessing, determine that propensity to its proper end? That it is of all things the best adapted to have this effect, is certainly a good reason for supposing that the Spirit of grace, who is also the Spirit of fitness and order, would prefer it before any other instrumentality. For our own part, we cannot but think it would do more in a few years, independently of labour, than the labour of many ages without it. It would make the church a wonder in the earth. The mountain of the Lord's house would stand upon the top of the mountains; it would be illuminated with Divine glory; its lustre would outshine that of the sun; it would enlighten the world; the remotest nations would see it, and would not all nations flow unto it?

“The world hitherto has not regarded the church as the seat of blessedness. It has had too little reason thus to regard it. Religion, by old report, is happiness; but it is religion as contained in books, not as dwelling in the hearts, or as shining out in the examples, of its professors. With comparatively few exceptions, since the primitive times, the lives of Christians have misrepresented the spirit of their religion. The world have judged it a sour, unhappy, gloomy spirit; and they have not wanted occasion to do so. They who have called themselves Christians have seemed little happier than others. The great majority of them have practically declared their religion a

gloomy thing, by going to the world itself for pleasure. Of the rest, the generality seem to pass through life, either with just enough of interest in religion to keep their membership in the church; or in a cold perfunctory preciseness; or in austerities which make religion identical with penance; or in a forced driving zeal, which bespeaks more of fierceness than calm heavenly peace and joy. A few of noble exceptions indeed there have been, but to the world's eye these exceptive cases have commonly been lost, in the multitude of their gloomy or earthly-minded brethren.

“Has not the church been the dwelling-place rather of doubt and fear, than of sensible delight in God? Is it not the way of even the best of her members to be habitually questioning in themselves whether they be not reprobates, instead of exulting in the full assurance of hope? Besides, has not the church been almost continually a scene of contention, and confusion, and bitter wrath, a dread and terror, rather than a charm to the world? Oh, let it not be said that the experiment of what may be done to save the world by the influence of a general example of spiritual peace and joy has yet been tried. Enough has been ascertained to encourage the highest expectation; the successes of the first Christians, the fruits of the individual examples of such blessed men as Baxter, Flavel, and Edwards, beget the greatest confidence as to what would be the result of experiment; but the experiment remains to be made. Come the day when it shall be in full operation. Hope is fixed on the appearance of that period, and that it will appear, can there be a doubt? Have not the prophets declared it? The Lord in his compassion cut short its delay; make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and so a praise in the earth; give to all Christians,

in answer to the prayer of Christ, that unity of soul, in which the Father and the Son are united to each other, the unity of Divine love and joy. Then shall our unhappy world learn the error of its way, forsake the broken cisterns of sin, and come to the Fountain of living waters."

We will now just glance at the more prevailing obstructions which hinder this joy, even in true believers.

A morbid physical tendency to gloom and depression is in some cases, all but an insuperable barrier to this state of mind. A cloud, impervious to the rays even of the Sun of Righteousness, perpetually hangs over, or occasionally comes over, some minds, throwing its dark and chilling shadow on their troubled bosoms. I do not mean a cloud so dense as that which wrapped the sensitive mind of poor Cowper in constant spiritual night—a settled religious melancholy—an almost total eclipse of the spiritual orb. Alas, for this there is no cure; and the hopeless patient can only be soothed with such palliatives as judicious friendship can supply. But the cases to which I now allude amount only to a tendency to nervous depression; which, though unattended by absolute despair, or constant cheerless despondency, leads the subjects of it ever to write bitter things against themselves. What minister has not met with cases of this kind—cases of even eminent Christians, who, amidst holiness, gentleness, and beautiful consistency, often walked in darkness and saw no light? Yes, ye hypochondriacal children of God, we have known you, sympathised with you, and encouraged you; and sometimes to little purpose. Your harp was upon the willows, and we saw you had no power to take it down: a morbid state of sorrow had paralysed your hand, and you could not sweep its strings. Let me remind you of one thing,—religion is not all feeling, but willing; and when the sensibility is

weak, the choice may be strong. You cannot, perhaps, rejoice, but you can confide; you cannot sing, but you can submit; you cannot be happy, but you can hope, and sometimes it must be against hope. Yours is a physical, not a moral defect: it is weak nerves, rather than weak faith. You must say, "Well, I feel I cannot expect to go on *my* way rejoicing, but I will still go on; and though I cannot serve the Lord with gladness, still I will serve him. I can be holy, if I cannot be happy. I cannot dissipate the cloud, but I will try to say,

‘I through the cloud believe thy grace,
Secure of thy compassion still.’”

There have been cases of this kind, in which I have ventured so far as to say, "Let others judge of your case for you."

Imperfect knowledge is another of the causes of a want of spiritual joy. The darkness of sorrow is often caused by the cloud of ignorance. Christians are often but imperfectly brought out of the bondage of the law into the liberty of the gospel. They dwell too near Sinai, and are ever hearing its thunders, scared by its lightnings, and terrified by its earthquake; and are endeavouring to find shelter in their own doings. They are, at any rate, only half-way between Sinai and Calvary—near enough to the former to be alarmed by the terrors of its justice, and not near enough to the latter to live in the light of its mercy. They are looking for that in themselves which is only to be found in Christ. They do not understand that simple injunction, "*Rejoice IN THE LORD.*" They do not clearly see the cross in all its glory and design; that the work of redemption and salvation is not ours, but God's; that Christ *has* taken away our sins; *has* redeemed us with

his precious blood ; has reconciled us to God. *They* are trying to do the work, and cannot rejoice that they have done it, instead of rejoicing that it has been done for them. They do not understand, or cannot believe Christ's dying words, "*It is finished :*" but they want to finish it themselves. Now there can be no strong, steady, shining light of joy—only flashes—till the eye of faith, instead of occasionally glancing at the cross, and beholding it through a mist, rests upon it, as seen in cloudless splendour.

Many good people suffer *a sense of remaining corruption* to extinguish all comfort. I would not of course take any one off from observing, acknowledging, mourning, and mortifying their corruptions, nor make them reconciled to their imperfections. I would not check their penitence, lift them above their humility, nor stop the work of crucifixion : but to be always mourning over their corruptions, and never rejoicing in the provision made for the pardon and removal of them, is not the way to cure but to perpetuate them. The way to kill some weeds is to let in a full blaze and power of sunshine upon them ; and one way of destroying our corruptions is to expose them to the smile of spiritual consolation. Other weeds wither in the shadow of a neighbouring plant. Imitate this process, and raise up your spiritual joy, to cast a chilling shade over your corruptions. Holiness often *exists* apart from joy, but it seldom *flourishes* apart from it.

But there is a still more prevalent cause than any yet mentioned for the deficiency of spiritual joy amongst professing Christians, I mean *the low state of personal godliness*. It is neither possessed nor desired by the great bulk of professing Christians. Had they no more happiness than what is furnished by their religion, they would be the most miserable of God's creatures, for this yields

them none. They may have a certain kind of pleasure in the excitement of public worship, and the religious activity of zeal ; but as to the peace of faith, the joy of the Holy Ghost, and real rejoicing in the Lord—the happiness that springs from believing the glorious gospel of the blessed God—the felicity which is connected with true holiness—of this, what do they know, or what do they wish to know ? They can do without it. It is in no sense essential to their enjoyment. Sin and joy cannot dwell together in the same bosom. “This little hand,” said Whitfield, placing his hand near his eyes, as he was preaching in the field, while the glorious sun was flooding creation with his beams—“this little hand hides all the lustre of the sun from my eyes ; and so a little sin may involve the soul in darkness, though the spiritual world be all bright as heaven itself.” To *pretend* to religious joy while living in sin, is the last stage of soul-delusion, and the last degree of induration of heart. And worldliness is no less destructive of spiritual peace than actual sin. Many an individual whose eye will wander over these pages, will, though he may have lost all the *comfort* of religion, have enough of its reminiscences left to sigh, and say,

“Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord ;
Where is the soul-refreshing view,
Of Jesus and his Word.

“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still ;
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.”

Let such persons determine to remain no longer in this disconsolate state. The way back to their former condition is still open. The sunny regions of heavenly peace are still accessible. The light of God’s countenance may

still be enjoyed by them : and Egyptian gloom exchanged for the illumination of Goshen. But their coming back must be in the spirit of the other part of the hymn,

“ Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest !
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast.

“ The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

“ So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame,
So purer light shall mark the road,
That leads me to the Lamb.”

CHAPTER V.

THE WORK OF FAITH.

MAN is made not only for contemplation and emotion, but for action. Activity is an essential attribute of human nature ; our faculties seem scarcely to exist but in exercise. Every thing in our world is in motion, and in God's great system, there is neither vacuum nor quiescence. The wheels of nature and of Providence are not made to roll backward nor to stand still. An idle man is one of the most miserable of God's creatures, and woe be to him who is self-doomed to suffer the pains and penalties of indolence. At his creation, man was destined to be a labourer. In Paradise Adam was a working man. There was, however, this difference between his condition then and ours now—in Eden his work was without fatigue, and pain, and wasting of his strength : now it is accompanied with all these. But still, that which in one respect is a curse, is in another a blessing. The curse does not consist in labour, but in the concomitants which sin has attached to it. If in Paradise, man would not have been happy without employment, when he had no dark and troubled thoughts—no guilty conscience to break in upon his solitude and make his own companionship unwelcome, and his hours tedious—how much less could he be happy now, with nothing to do but to converse with his own depraved heart and burdened conscience. It is not labour then, but the excess of it, which constitutes the curse : and even

the hardest labour would soon to most persons become more tolerable than absolute non-employment.

Man thus must work—yes, and so must the *Christian*. The Bible knows nothing of an unworking believer. There will be employment in heaven. We are not to conceive of the celestial state as one of dreamy repose. We know very well “there remaineth a *rest* for the people of God :” but with our incorruptible, spiritual, and glorified bodies, activity will be rest, and rest activity. It is beautifully said of that state, “There his servants shall serve him.” As if it were their sole employment, honour, and bliss, to serve *Him*. The flame of love will not consume itself in the mere fervour of seraphic devotion, but will diffuse the warmth of life through the glorified soul and body, and sustain the untiring and unexhausted energies of both in immortal vigour.

We here take up two or three passages of Holy Scripture. The apostle, in writing to the Thessalonians, speaks of “THE WORK OF FAITH,” 1, Chap. i, 4 ; 2, Chap. i, 11. By this we are to understand, not what faith is, but what it does. It is of *itself* a *mental* work, but the apostle evidently intends to describe its effects rather than its nature, and to represent it as a principle or rather *the* principle of Christian activity. We may next refer to what is said in James ii: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? Faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.” In that important practical part of the New Testament, the apostle does not intend to contradict the apostle Paul, as we showed in a former chapter, where he states that we

are justified by faith without works, but to shew that the faith which stands alone in the justification of a sinner, necessarily draws after it the good works which justify the profession of the believer. Here, then, the indispensable necessity of good works as a fruit of faith, and a condition, though not a meritorious one, of salvation, is most emphatically insisted upon. How much is said about this subject in other places, even by Paul, though he so strenuously insisted upon the exclusion of good works from justification. He describes the real Christian as one who is "*zealous* of good works."—Titus ii, 14. Almost immediately afterwards, he says, "Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful."—Titus iii, 14. And just before this we find the following striking passage, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that" (in order that) "they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works,"—verse 8. The faithful sayings and things which the apostle orders Titus to affirm, are not what follows, but what went before, *i. e.*, our justification by grace through faith. It is not a mere direction to Titus to inculcate upon believers the practice of good works, but a direction as to the most efficient means of maintaining that practice; and that is, a full exhibition and earnest enforcement of the great essential articles of evangelical truth: these were to be constantly affirmed, in order that believers might be careful to maintain good works. Evangelical doctrines were to be taught as the seminal principles of evangelical practice. Justification by faith *without* works was to be exhibited and applied for the very purpose of *producing* works. What an answer to those who tell us that the doctrines of grace lead to licentiousness! On the other hand, what a severe

rebuke to those who treat these doctrines as mere theological dogmas, or Christian privileges, but not as practical principles. Nothing more strikingly proves and represents the practical nature of the gospel, than this; nor more beautifully exhibits the union of Christian theology with Christian morality. Justification and sanctification are not only inseparably joined together, but the former is to be taught for the purpose of producing the latter.

We come then to this great and important conclusion, that true faith is inseparable from, and productive of, good works. It may be well here to describe good works.

1. They must be good in *nature*: materially good—good in themselves. By which we mean they must be something which God has commanded. The rule of actions which are entitled to this epithet, is the Word of God. Religion consists in doing just what God has enjoined and nothing more: all unprescribed services, however imposing in appearance; however mortifying to the flesh; however commanded by men or by ecclesiastical authority; instead of being good works are bad ones. All that mass of ceremony with which Popery has overlaid the simplicity that is in Christ, is a wicked invasion of the authority of God, and a corruption of his religion, and meets with no other reception from him, than the hypocritical formalism of the Jews, in reference to which he said, “Who hath required this at your hands?” To command what *God* has not commanded, and thus add to his laws, is a reflection upon his wisdom and goodness, and an usurpation of his rights; for if it be good and right to be done, why did he neglect to enjoin it? if it is bad, who so wicked as to prescribe it? Is it not setting up another authority than his to enjoin what he has not enjoined? What would be said of any one who should presume to

add to the laws of this kingdom, and who made it the duty of her Majesty's subjects to obey them? Upon this absurd notion of our doing something more than what God has commanded, and than what it is our duty to do, the Popish doctrine of supererogation and indulgences is founded. The merit of this surplus of duty goes to form a treasury, placed at the disposal of the Pope, who can deal it out in such measures as he thinks fit, for the benefit of the souls in purgatory, to lessen the weight or shorten the duration of their sufferings in that disciplinary state. How horrid an idea! But what a power it gives to that accursed system! Surely true piety may find enough to do in what is commanded, without inventing and doing what is not.

By good works then, we are to understand all the great duties of christian morals—all that we owe to God according to the prescriptions of the moral law and the christian economy; together with all that we owe to our neighbour according to the second table of the law—and all that we owe to ourselves in the way of self-government of our appetites and propensities. Justice, truth, chastity, mercy, social and domestic virtue: these are the virtues, the excellence of which is acknowledged by all nations; the necessity of which to the well-being of society, has been admitted by moralists of every country and every age; to the neglect or practice of which, historians have traced the prosperity or the decline of nations. These are the good works which Christianity enjoins. Her religious rites are few and simple; her ceremonies occupy a very small and secondary place in her system; the main space being left for the whatsoever things are true, and honest, and pure, and just, and lovely, and of good report. Her place on earth is not merely the sanctuary of religion, but the scenes of social

and domestic life. Her business is not only to regulate the ceremonial of the temple, but the transactions of the exchange. And her object is not only to make the devotee, but the good member of social life. And this is its excellence and its glory.

But while the whole range of moral duties is included within the circle of "good works," and are all the fruits of faith, there is one species of sacred virtue, which in the Scripture, by way of special emphasis, is designated "*good*," and that is *beneficence*. Hence by the injunction, "Do good," the apostle intends, acts of *benevolence*. This also is his meaning where he says, "For scarcely for a righteous (*i. e.*, just) man, will one die: yet peradventure for a good (*i. e.*, benevolent) man, some would even dare to die." From this it is evident, that in those days eminent philanthropy was supposed to be the crown of virtue: the man who to justice added mercy, was considered the perfection of humanity: a perfection very rarely exhibited in the heathen world. Here we have occasion again to note and admire the excellence of Christianity, inasmuch as it inculcates not only good works in general, but especially that particular species, which by way of eminence and emphasis, is set forth as the best of the good: and clearly shows that a Christian is to be distinguished above all others by his abounding beneficence.

2. Good works are such as spring from faith in the system of Divine truth; but as this is included in the general subject, I need not enlarge upon it, farther than to say, that they cannot precede, but must follow the exercise of faith. Not only must there be faith in God, but in Christ—not only faith in general, but saving faith—not only faith for sanctification, but for justification, before good works can be performed. We should however hesi-

tate to call the amiable, useful, and lovely virtues which are practised by some unconverted persons, in the full sense of the phrase, bad or wicked works. That they do not constitute holiness, cannot be accepted of God as morally excellent, and can avail nothing to salvation, is quite clear: but they may be characterised as defective, and therefore sinful, rather than wicked, except where they are performed under the impulse of pride or vanity. Till a man really believes in Christ, there certainly can be no works that are spiritually good. The Article of the Church of England, "On Works done before Justification," is very explicit on this subject. "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say,) deserve grace of congruity; yea, rather for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin."

3. Good works must proceed from a renewed heart. The tree must be made good, before the fruit can be good. The fruits of the Spirit can be yielded only by a heart sanctified by the Spirit. There is a material difference, as in a former chapter we have considered, between the morality of a worldly man, and that of a Christian; not in outward appearance, but in inward principle: not in matter, but in rule, motive, end: not in benefit to the object, but in reward to the subject.

4. Good works are such as are directed to the glory of God. The end of an action is its moral characteristic. It is not only what I do that constitutes moral excellence, but for what end and purpose I do it. A man may be exceedingly kind to a fellow-creature, and really promote his

happiness, and yet it may not be out of any regard to the welfare of the individual whom he thus favours, but merely to promote some personal end of his own. Under the guise of bounty he may conceal the most detestable selfishness. So whatever works, materially excellent, a man may perform towards God, yet they are not good in the scriptural sense of the word, unless they are performed with an intelligent and voluntary regard to that injunction, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Leave out God as the end of our actions, and every thing we do falls short of religion, however excellent it may appear in itself, and however beneficial it may be to others.

We can now clearly perceive, that in all this, faith bears a most distinguished part—faith recognises the Word of God as the rule of conduct, which teaches us what good works are required of us—it brings us into a state of acceptance with God, on the ground of which our works are accepted—it unites us to Christ, and derives from him, as the branch from the tree, the spiritual life which enables us to bring forth good fruit—and it acknowledges God to be the end of all our actions.

There is one beautiful exhibition of the operation of faith, which deserves separate and special notice, as presenting us with a very complete and very attractive representation: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but FAITH WHICH WORKETH BY LOVE."—Gal. v, 6. In this one passage—in these few plain words—the whole Christian scheme comes out upon us in all its simplicity, sublimity, and beauty. We learn it both in its negative form, as setting light by ceremony, and in its positive nature, as consisting of spiritual exercises and moral duties. Here is an epitome of gospel truth and gospel practice—of Christian

duty and Christian privilege. Who, in comparing with this the gorgeous ritual of Popery, and its humble imitations in Puseyism, does not perceive that the system of the New Testament and that of these corruptions of it, are two entirely different things. How opposed to the spirit of this simple and beautiful language is the spirit of that formalism which has become so fashionable in these modern times. What do we find in this passage, or any other in the New Testament, of that zeal for architecture and sculpture—for surplices and robes—for postures and genuflexions—for sacraments and ceremonies—for fasts and festivals—for apostolical succession and episcopal ordination—for priestly mediation and prelatical authority—for absolution and confession—for the position of a font and the furniture and shape of the altar—which enter so largely into the religion of so many in these days? How melancholy does it make an intelligent and ardent lover of his New Testament, to see Christianity, which came into our world to raise human nature not only to its manhood, but to ~~the~~ real and noble sainthood, degraded to the task of substituting endless frivolities for substantial excellences; to see her compelled to mimic the ceremonies of Paganism, and to go back to the obsolete system of Judaism, in order to restore to us a religion of the senses instead of the intellect: and thus, while the world around is growing in strength and stature, exhibiting the church sinking into a second childhood, and becoming a pupil of the Pope instead of Christ. But no: Christianity does not, will not sanction this; it may be done in her name, but it is without her authority, and against her precepts and her genius. She that in the person of her Divine Lord was born in a stable—brought up at Nazareth—delivered her lessons on mountains and in streets—chose her

apostles from the boats of fishermen—and summed up all she is and all she taught in these few simple words, **FAITH THAT WORKETH BY LOVE**: she, I say, turns with the mingled smile of contempt and frown of indignation, from the trumperies which the priests of more churches than one, are palming upon this generation for pure and undefiled religion. Because God in his wisdom, gave to his church in its infancy a Bible of hieroglyphics and a religion of symbols, these men would prevent the church from coming to the unity of the faith, and a knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Here, then, are our activities—not a moving round and round in the enchanted circle of the church, instead of the Bible; of ceremonial observances, rather than moral duties; ever in motion, but never in progress—no; but instead of this, cherishing the faith that worketh by love. We do not mean to contend that this excludes the observance of public worship, baptism, and the Lord’s supper; but we do mean to say that, by implication, it places these below the exercise of faith and love, as far inferior to them.

We have now to consider, in following out the consideration of this passage,

1. What the love is that faith produces. And this of course begins with God. He is the supreme object of holy love. Religion is love, and love begins with God. The very substance of true conversion is a change from supreme selfishness to this Divine affection. Every unconverted sinner is supremely selfish; that is, he loves himself, and all that pertains to himself, instead of God. He goes further in depravity than this; for he not only does not love God, but he dislikes him. “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” He views God as his

enemy. Under a consciousness that he has sinned against God, he is afraid of him, and retires from him; and would for ever avoid him if he could. He likes nothing that appertains to him, neither his people, nor his Word, nor his service. Though a sense of his dependence may sometimes lead him to ask his pity and help; yet in other circumstances and moods, he is repelled from God, especially when viewed in his moral attributes of holiness and justice. Conscious guilt, therefore, works by enmity. In this state, the mind, and heart, and conscience, of the sinner remain, and ever must remain, till faith comes into his heart. There he is, as long as he is ignorant of the gospel, and destitute of faith in Christ, a sullen wanderer from God, feeling, if not saying, "Depart from me; I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." But the hour of mercy arrives. His attention is arrested either by a sermon, or by some other means, and fixed upon the glad tidings of salvation. He is convinced by the Spirit, not only of sin, but of righteousness. The message of Divine love in Christ's death as an atonement, not only reaches his ear, but enters, like heavenly music, into his very soul. Yes, it is a fact—a great and glorious fact—that God has loved *him*; Christ died for *him*; salvation is offered *him*. He *believes* it—really believes it: not only hears of it, talks of it, desires it—but believes it. He commits his soul, by an act of confidence, into the hands of Christ. There is his faith—simple, firm, hopeful. That faith has changed every thing. It has wrought an entire revolution of thought, feeling, and willing. For see what he has believed:—he believes God has good-will towards him; willeth not his death; delights in his salvation, and has been all along during the days of his stubborn unregeneracy waiting to be gracious to him. He hears his voice saying,

“Come unto me. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?” Can a man really believe that, and not be changed? Impossible. His sullenness gives way—his heart melts—all his views of God are changed, and so are all his feelings towards him. “He loves me, he loves me,” he exclaims with astonishment. “Wicked as I have been : wretch that I have proved myself towards him : he has sent his Son to die for me, and has pursued me by his Spirit in my wanderings, and has at length brought me to himself. Oh, my father, my father, thou hast conquered me by love : and now what can I do but love *thee* in return. Yes, thou that wast once the object of my hatred, art the object of my supreme affection : thou that wast once the point of repulsion for my poor guilty soul, art the sovereign attraction. What now shall I render thee for thine infinite mercies towards me? ‘Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds.’”

What a change! Now, God appears infinitely lovely. Every attribute of his nature is a separate glory, and all combined are transcendent beauty. Even justice and holiness, which once so terrified him and drove him away like the flaming sword of the cherubim repelling Adam from Eden, are all loveliness, as well as mercy. Wonder, gratitude, love, joy, all by turns, take possession of his soul. All that is God’s, now delights—his character, his Word, his people, his day, his service.

And especially is Jesus Christ an object of affection. Once a cold and careless thought, and this only occasional, was all he gave to Christ. He saw no beauty that he should desire him : no worth that he should choose him. His bosom never glowed with a beam of genial warmth. The cross itself was a sound that awakened no emotion. Neither Gethsemane nor Calvary had any charms for him.

He considered the joys of believers as enthusiasm, and their attestations to the preciousness of him whom unseen they loved, as little better than cant. But now, what a change has come over him in reference to the Saviour of his soul. His name, is music; his person, the object of admiration, love, and delight; his work, the cause of unbounded gratitude; his example, the perfection of beauty; and his commandments, a law most pleasant to be obeyed. He is indeed "precious,"—the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. What has produced this change of sentiment, feeling, and choice? What is it that has made the subject of this change thus voluntarily take up the yoke he once spurned, and that impels him on to works of devotedness, obedience, and self-denial? FAITH! The man has now really believed, which he never did before, the testimony concerning Christ. He had read it with a careless eye, and heard it with a half-closed ear, but without a single fixed thought, or one conviction of truth; but now he understands, believes, and all is changed. O, what a revolution was wrought in that hour when faith opened the door of the heart, and let in the testimony to Christ contained in the Gospel.

And we can understand this easily enough by analogy. There is a fellow-creature whom your misconduct has made your enemy. He is powerful, and can avenge the insult you have offered and the injury you have inflicted. You dread him, and in equal proportion is your hatred of him. You shun him, for you are afraid of him, since you imagine he can entertain no purpose towards you but of revenge. But you mistake his character and his intentions. He is generous and forgiving, and out of mere kindness sends you a message that he is willing to pardon you and receive you to his friendship. At first you cannot credit the asser-

tion, and retain your dread and hate. The message of mercy is repeated and confirmed by evidence you cannot resist: your stubborn unbelief, and sullen ill-will relax, and you begin to think more favourably of his disposition towards you, and to feel a change coming over *your* disposition towards *him*. At length you are brought into full confidence in his unmerited and surprising favour. "Yes," you exclaim, "it is really true—he that could have ruined me, pities me and pardons me—I cannot doubt it, I believe it. I am vanquished by love. O my benefactor, my benefactor, I thank thee—I love thee—and from this hour I will serve thee." What is this? Faith working by love: and a resemblance of the operation of the grace of faith in the sinner's heart towards Jesus Christ, and his Divine Father. "We love him because he first loved us:" and the cause of that entire change in all our views of and feelings towards God, which constitutes conversion, is thus stated by the apostle—"We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." I John iv, 16. Herein is verified his own beautiful language to the Jews, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love."—Hosea xi, 4. O wondrous power of love! Mighty conqueror of man's stony heart! How soft, yet how invincible thine influence! But it must be believed to be victorious. Doubts and fears of its reality, or its sincerity, deprive it of its force. Even the infinite, omnipotent love of the eternal God can have no power over the soul that is steeled in unbelief. It is faith that unlocks, unbolts, unbars the gate of "Mansoul," for love, which is besieging it in vain till then, to enter and take full possession. And in every after stage of the Christian life, it is this same faith keeping up the same lively sense of God's love to us, that keeps up our love to God.

Love being thus brought into the soul by faith, and kept there also, remains not idle or inert, but sets instantly to work. Love is the most active thing in all the world. See it in the conduct of a tender and faithful wife towards the husband of her heart. See it in the mother's sleepless activities towards the babe at her bosom. See it in the devoted servant towards the master of his choice. What will not love *do* in the way of constant, self-denying, untiring activity, or *bear* in the way of privation and suffering. How hardly, yet how willingly, and cheerfully, and pleasantly, it works for its object. Work is pleasure—labour is delight. Love seems to resemble the cherubic figure, having the courage of the lion, the patience of the ox, the wing of the eagle, and all directed by the intelligence and will of the man.

All this is true of love to God, which is the strongest, the tenderest, and most invincible of all loves. It is the sublime of love, the loftiest and noblest exercise of this master-passion of the human soul. And then it works in the way of obedience, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."—1 John v, 3. It is not a mere emotion, but a principle—not only a matter of the sensibility, but of the will; not the mere genial warmth of a soul of softer mould, but the steady, and in some cases stern resolve of a mind that lays hold of the strength of God, and says, "I will serve thee even unto death." The works it performs are all things that God has enjoined. It takes up the moral law, and says, "All this will I do: my delight is to do thy will, O God." It allows of no selections or exceptions, but says, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to *all* thy commandments." It ~~makes~~ no stipulations, but surrenders itself to any conditions or circumstances. It covenants for no limitations of time or

place, but is eager to serve every where, on earth and in heaven—and always, unto death and through eternity. There is one thing, and one only in all the universe it hates, and that it does hate with an intense and unquenchable animosity in all its forms and degrees—and that is sin : and there is one thing it covets, seeks, and prays for, with all its heart, and soul, and strength—and that is holiness. Such is *love*, such the working of *faith* by love.

But still this is only one, though it must be admitted the loftiest aspect of love. God is the first and supreme, but not the only object of Christian affection. There is a second as well as a first table of the law, which demands love to our neighbour, even as the first demands it for God. And even to this second table of the law the gospel adds a supplement, and demands a holy regard for our Christian brother : both of which are conjoined by the apostle, where he says, “add to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.”

How frequently, how variously, and how earnestly are we enjoined both by our Lord, and by that disciple whom Jesus loved, and who by leaning on his bosom seemed to have caught most of his spirit, to love our brethren in Christ. Love to them is the law of his kingdom—“This is my commandment, that ye love one another.” It is the badge of discipleship—“Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.” It is the evidence of conversion—“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” It is the grand inference from the cross—“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” It is the natural yearning of the renewed heart—the instinctive promptings of the new nature—the reaching forth of the arm too feeble and too short to clasp the neck of the Divine Father, to entwine around his image in his children.

And what is the spring of this affection? Why faith. See how these two are united—"Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints."—Phil., 5. As if it were impossible to have faith in Christ without love towards the saints. And so it is utterly and absolutely impossible: and the more faith we have in Christ the more love we shall have towards the saints. Believing the love that Christ hath towards them, viewing them as the purchase of his blood and the objects of his tenderest affection, our hearts will by a kind of necessity be knit to them. Every fresh view of the cross will endear them to our hearts. If each limb of our body were the seat of a separate consciousness, how strong a regard, and tender a sympathy, might it be supposed would subsist between the members, and how all would love each, and each all, on account of the one animating and presiding soul which was their centre of unity. Now in the mystical body of Christ, this is the case; each *has* a separate individual soul, while all are united to the same Divine Head, and each loves all, and all love each, on account of the Divine Head to which all are united by faith; and as each presses nearer to the great centre, they all press nearer to one another.

And why is it that the members of this body do not love one another more, and allow such comparatively trifling matters to alienate them from each other? How is it that sectarianism gains such an ascendancy over the members of the redeemed family, and introduces so much coldness, distance, and even hostility? Just because the faith of the church is so weak. Did we more powerfully realise the fact that Christ has died for us all—that he loves us all—that he claims us all—that he delights in us all—would not the effect of this persuasion be to check the pro-

gress of alienation and draw us closer to each other? Are there not happy, holy moments, rich in blessing, when gazing upon the cross, and melting into love, we feel as if we really *did* love without one alien feeling, all for whom Christ died. Before that strong and steady belief, which comprehended the whole plan, purpose, and objects of redeeming mercy, every enmity was subdued, and all indifference was warmed into affection, and we felt on rising from **our** knees as if there were not a Christian in existence of **any** sect, creed, or party, around whose neck we could not throw the arms of love, and say, "My brother, my brother." It is only from a stronger faith that a stronger love can grow up in the Christian church, and all attempts to bring about union that do not begin here will most assuredly fail. The first movement, therefore, in this direction, must be towards the cross.

But then to brotherly-kindness must be added charity. By the latter, as distinguished from the former, we are to understand good-will to all mankind, irrespective of character. The one is brother-love : the other is neighbour-love. The one is obedience to the law, the other is the fruit of the gospel : but both are the fruits of a working faith. It is of this love the apostle speaks in that beautiful chapter, the thirteenth of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The subject of that wonderful and glorious portion of Scripture is the charity we are to add to our brotherly-kindness. That one chapter is worth incalculably more than all the volumes the pen of moral philosophy ever wrote. What a happy world, how nearly resembling heaven, we should live in, if that were the rule of conduct every where, always, in all things, and for all men. Earth would reflect the face of heaven, even as in the mirror of a peaceful lake, the quiet, noiseless, blue sky is to be seen.

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind : charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up ; doth not behave itself unseemly ; seeketh not her own ; is not easily provoked ; thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things ; believeth all things ; hopeth all things ; endureth all things.” What a seraph ! But whence is she to come, and what is to bring her ? Whence ? From heaven. What ? Faith. No, there is nothing like this on earth. She *has* lain in the bosom of God ; and next to his Son, is his *darling* offspring, which, at the prayer of faith, he sends down to bless the world. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him. Charity, or good-will to all, a desire of the happiness of all, and a will to promote it, is the very culminating point—the crown and glory of love, so far as creatures are its object. Even the whole church is not enough, nor the whole world, but the great universe of God. All being, created or uncreated, is the object of his regard ; and happiness, the happiness of the whole, his desire. His heart works outward in its wishes to the remotest circle. And what is the impulsive power ? Faith. He believes in God, and in God’s love. He believes in Christ, and in Christ’s love. He believes that “God so loved *the world* as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” He believes that Christ shed his blood as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He would love all whom God and Christ love, and with the same kind of love. He would keep pace in the workings of his benevolence with the workings of that which is Divine. His universal benevolence is a very different thing from that which infidelity prates about, and some few years ago endeavoured to raise on the ruins of indi-

vidual tenderness and particular regards. It takes its pattern from God's, which recognises the social ties and their charities, and leaves in all their strength, order, and working, the relations of man to man; but which at the same time, moves onward from particulars to generals.

He that has most faith, will have most charity. The predominance of this all-working, ever-working, mighty-working principle, would convert the whole church into a company of philanthropists. When the full power of the cross is felt in the hearts of believers,—when all the constraining influence of the love of Christ is experienced,—when the whole church is fully possessed with the spirit of faith, and rooted and grounded in love,—the scene so beautifully exhibited in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, will in some form and extent be repeated, and no man call ought that he hath his own—with this only difference, that the love of believers will not stay in the church, but go out into all the world. The Howards, the Clarksons, the Wilberforces, the Buxtons, the Allens, the Mrs. Frys, whose zeal and humanity were produced by faith, will no longer be the rare and beautiful exceptions to the ordinary believers, but the ordinary race of Christians. And the Schwartzs, the Brainerds, the Careys, the Morrisons, the Martyns, the Vanderkemps, the Williamses, the Moffats, will be only the average standard of professing Christians. The full power of faith would make the whole church willing to be philanthropists, missionaries, reformers, or martyrs, as God should require.

Then, when faith has acquired this power, will the church exhibit its characteristic loveliness as the benefactress of the world. To do good is its calling. It is God's representative in our world; and, as bearing his image, to teach the world what he is, it should bear upon its

lofty front this inscription, "The church is love, for *God* is love." All professing Christians should feel that benevolence is their appropriate duty, their very work of works. The love of the world should appear to be destroyed. That eager ambition after wealth, for the sake of the luxuries and splendours which it enables its possessor to command, should be transmuted into a desire to be rich in order to be liberal. The glory of affluence should, in their estimation, lie in the opportunity it affords to do good. Instead of an anxiety to obtain noble mansions, elegant furniture, handsome equipages, and expensive entertainments, and all the other luxuries of taste and fashion, the followers of Him, who though rich, yet for their sakes became poor, and of his equally poor apostles, should be distinguished for an expressive simplicity of habit and manners. In this way, among others, their faith should gain the victory over the world; in this way, should work by love; in this way, labour for the good of mankind. They should contract their luxuries that they may enlarge their charities. Economy should provide the resources of their liberality; and they should spend too much upon others to have much to spend upon themselves, instead of reversing this as many do, who spend too much upon themselves, to have much to spend upon others. And a stronger faith must and would inevitably lead to this. For who *could* embrace, by a vigorous belief, the self-denying doctrines, precepts, and example of Christ, and not realise their obligations and perform their duties?

Here then is the "labour of love," springing from the work of faith.

But it is time to draw this chapter to a close, and what better close can be given to it, than most emphatically again to remind the reader, that religion is work—hard

work—a great work. It is by multitudes fearfully mistaken. All along the page of inspired truth, the word is continually occurring—work, work, work. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” “Be zealous of good works.” “Be careful to maintain good works.” “I know thy works.” These are but specimens of Scripture language on this subject. I am afraid that many are deceiving themselves with a religion which is neither *work* nor pleasure, but only a name. They have perverted the doctrine of justification by faith without works, into an excuse for the neglect of works altogether. They seem to imagine that faith is an opiate instead of a stimulant—Calvary a place of slumber instead of labour—and the cross a goal instead of a starting-point. When we are converted, instead of considering our labour done, we should remember it is but just begun. When the Israelites were possessed of Canaan, they had the Amorites and other enemies to conquer and drive out before them. Every man has corrupt and sinful habits that have overspread, and as it were engarrisoned, themselves in the heart, and which can be reduced only by a tedious and valorous siege. Or to change the metaphor, habits like weeds that by an accursed fertility are ever springing up in the soil of our moral nature, sprout afresh as often as they are cut down. Let a man make experiment in any one sin of his heart, whether it be pride, or malice, or covetousness; and does it fall before his attempts at mortification suddenly and easily? Does the first foil or blow make him victorious, and enable him to set his foot upon the neck of his conquered enemy? No, are there not many vicissitudes in the combat? Is he not sometimes victor,

and at other times vanquished? And perhaps after all his conflicts with it, many a Christian goes out of the world only with this half-trophy, enough indeed just to save him, that he was not overcome. Alas, of how few can it be said, "They are *more* than conquerors."

Then let it be remembered also, the work of mortification is but half the work a Christian has to do; for there is also vivification, which is the other half. Religion ends not in negatives. No man ploughs his field, or tills his garden, merely to kill weeds, but to sow corn and to plant flowers. A room may be clean, and yet empty: and it is not enough for our hearts to be swept unless they be also furnished. A man may not in disposition be a tiger or a demon, and yet he may not be a saint or an angel. Now our religion requires not only putting away our pride, our malice, our covetousness, and our injustice, but also cultivating humility, liberality, love, and generosity. Religion is of an aspiring nature, requiring us to proceed from grace to grace; to faith adding virtue, to virtue adding patience, to patience temperance, to temperance godliness, to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity; thus ascending by degrees, till at length the top of the lofty staircase reaches to heaven, and lands the soul so qualified in the mansions of glory.* And who knows not that the ascent by such a steep flight of steps is a work of labour and difficulty?

Nothing but faith can enable the soul to accomplish this; and this it does, as we have shown in the chapter on sanctification, by obtaining through Christ that aid of the Holy Spirit, by which alone our good works can be accomplished.

I conclude this chapter with the words of Bishop

* South's Sermons.

Jeremy Taylor, "From these premises we may see but too evidently, that though a great part of mankind pretend to be saved by faith, yet they know not what it is, or wilfully mistake it, and place their hopes upon sand or the more unstable waters. Believing is the least thing in a justifying faith. Alas, the niceties of a spruce understanding, and the curious nothings of a useless speculation, and all the opinions of men that make the divisions of heart, and do nothing else, cannot bring us one drop of comfort in the day of tribulation; and therefore are no parts of the strength of faith. Nay, when a man begins truly to fear God, and is in the agonies of mortification, all these new nothings and curiosities will be neglected, as baubles are by children when they are deadly sick. But that only is faith, which makes us to love God, to do his will, to suffer his impositions, to trust his promises, to see through a cloud, to overcome the world, to resist the devil, to stand in the day of trial, and to be comforted in all our sorrows. This is that precious faith, so mainly necessary to be insisted on, that by it we may be the sons of the free woman; that the true Isaac may be in us, which is Christ according to the Spirit; the wisdom and power of God; a Divine vigour and life, whereby they are enabled with joy and cheerfulness to walk in the way of God. By this you may try your faith, if you please, and make an end of the question,—‘Do you believe in the Lord Jesus,—yea or no? God forbid else; but if your faith be good, it will abide the trial. There are but three things that make the integrity of Christian faith,—believing the words of God; confidence in his goodness; and keeping his commandments.’”

CHAPTER VI.

FAITH'S VICTORY OVER THE WORLD.

THE situation and circumstances of the Christian during his state of discipline and probation upon earth, are singularly, awfully, and perilously, critical. His attention is divided between two worlds. He is placed amidst the scenes, the duties, the possessions, the trials of one world, all of which are ever appealing to the senses, and urging their claims upon the faculties and instincts of our nature; claims which he cannot, dare not, altogether resist or neglect: and yet amidst these objects always present to him, he is, upon peril of his immortal soul, supremely to value, pursue, and enjoy the objects of another world, of which he knows nothing but by report. He must not omit one just and proper interest of this life, to which he is related by his both various and tender ties; and yet he must regard, practically and constantly, as his *highest* interest, the life that is to come. He must, to a certain extent, mind the things on earth, and yet his affections must be set on things in heaven: the visible must not be neglected, yet the invisible must be supremely regarded: the temporal must be attended to in due season and measure, and yet the eternal must predominate. If this be easy, nothing is difficult. If this be a facile accomplishment, how is it that so few succeed?

What is the mighty principle which shall arbitrate between the claims of these two rival worlds for man's affec-

tions ; give to each its due ; and so enable him to attend to the present, as not to encroach upon the future ? FAITH. It is for want of this, such multitudes who escape the snares of vice, and the other ways to perdition, which are ever open and always crowded, are still lost. If immorality slays its thousands, the world slays its ten thousands. In every Christian land, worldliness is the most thronged road to everlasting ruin. The supreme love of the world will as certainly lead its possessor to the bottomless-pit as the love of sin ; for “ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”—1 John ii, 15, 16. Yet with how much general reputation, amiable disposition, and social excellence, may this supreme regard to things seen and temporal be associated. Worldliness, I repeat, and repeat with emphasis, is the smoothest, the genteelest, the most respectable path to the bottomless-pit. Nor does this worldliness consist merely of an intense love of money, and an excessive eagerness to be rich, but as we shall presently show, in such a supreme regard to the visible and the temporal, whether these relate to the quiet scenes of domestic comfort, or to the elegances, splendours, and accumulations of wealth, as leads a man to seek his highest bliss in these.

The danger of a destructive worldliness arises then, not only from the adaptation of surrounding objects to our senses, our tastes, and our appetites, but from the necessity we are under to pay some attention to them, and from the difficulty of ascertaining what that precise measure of attention really is ; and also from the proneness there is in us to make this duty and this difficulty an excuse for a supreme and exclusive regard to earthly objects. Yet it

can be no excuse, for we have a volume in our possession, which commands us in the name, and with the authority of God, not to love the world, but to set our affections on that other world, the certainty of whose existence it establishes, and the glory of whose objects it reveals. Let us be surrounded by what earthly objects we may, or occupied by what present duties in reference to them we may, there is a voice ever sounding in our ears the solemn mandate, "*Love not the world—Love not the world.*" "By the nobler part of our nature, we are placed in the most solemn relations to another economy. And not to have a deep sense of this fact, implies that something is enormously wrong. This immortal spirit was appointed but for a few years to this earth; but eternally to another state. And it is placed in relations comporting with its eternity of existence;—to God the one infinite Being—the one, sole, perfect and independent Essence;—to the Redeemer, the Lord, and the life of the new Economy;—to an unseen state;—to an order of exalted, holy, and happy beings in that state;—to a pure, exalted, and endless felicity in that state. And do I give, in conformity to one law of my nature, a great measure of my affection to the things to which I have a subordinate *temporary* relation, and refuse affection towards those to which I have an *eternal* relation? How marvellous and how lamentable that the soul *can* consent to stay in the dust, when invited above to the stars; having in its own experience the demonstration that this is not its world; knowing that even if it were, the possession will soon cease; and having a glorious revelation and a continual call from above."*

We have already said there is a principle by which the due subordination of things seen and temporal, to things

unseen and eternal, may be maintained. The apostle confirms our assertion, where he says, "*Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*"—1 John v, 4. By the world, in this passage, we are to understand all the objects of earth: wealth, honour, pleasure, renown; the favour or the wrath of man; the scenery of nature, and the objects of science; some things unlawful in their nature, and others unlawful only when supremely regarded;—in short, to use the expression of the apostle already quoted, *things seen and temporal*, as distinguished from *things unseen and eternal*. Such is the world that assails the Christian, and which he must overcome or perish eternally.

The world is a foe which attacks us in various places; in the shop, by all the temptations incident to trade and wealth; in the halls of legislation and public business, by all the enticements to pride and ambition; in the places of amusement, by all the soft blandishments of pleasure; in the haunts of vice, by all the gratifications of appetite; in the scenes of nature, by all the delights of taste and imagination; in the walks of science and literature, by all the delights of intellectual gratification; in the social circle, by all the enjoyments of friendship; and in the domestic retreat, by all the sweets of connubial bliss. Oh, how many are the scenes where the world meets man and subdues him. And how many also are its weapons and its methods of attack. There are its *examples*, how numerous, how various, and some of them how fascinating; and as our manners and habits are so much formed by imitation, how difficult it is with such models perpetually before him, for the believer always to preserve the purity, the integrity, and the beneficence of the Christian charac-

ter. There are the *false principles* and *loose maxims* of a relaxed morality, so plausibly defended and so widely circulated as to conceal their sinfulness, and to come recommended by a warrant and authority which it is difficult to resist. Sometimes the world approaches the believer with a smiling face, making *promises* and offering *caresses*, like the serpent to our first mother in the garden, or like Satan to our Lord when he said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." How difficult is it on such occasions to turn away from the fair enchantress, to keep the eye steadily fixed on heavenly glories, and instead of greedily quaffing the cup of poisoned sweets, to dash it on the ground. At other times, the world marches onward with *persecution*; in some cases with cruelty and rage, and at others with ridicule and scoffs. We have not to fear the path of blood or fire, but though the scaffold and the stake are, we hope, for ever gone, how often are believers called for conscience's sake to bear the indignation of friends, the loss of public favour, or the malignant raillery of those whose conduct has been reprov'd, and whose conscience has been aroused by their holy and consistent conduct. How hard is it to bear such treatment with patience and resignation, and to hold fast the principles and conduct which have incurred it. How many are there whose good resolutions have been shaken by the mockeries and insults with which libertines have treated the pious; by the malignant and diabolical pleasure with which they have seized upon the smallest failings of the believer, and held them up with bitter scorn and wicked exaggerations to the public gaze. How many are there, who, afraid of the railleries and scoffs which attend an inflexible adherence to duty, have abandoned that firm and independent deportment which

becomes the Christian ; have striven on almost every point to accommodate their conduct to that of the world ; and have endeavoured, by means which have marred their peace and wounded their conscience, to diminish the contrast which ought ever to subsist between the lives of the pious and the impenitent. The world assails and vanquishes many, and wounds if it does not destroy others, by *places and offices of public trust and duty*. The senatorial, magisterial, and municipal honours and responsibilities, have in many cases been a sad snare to professing Christians. They have been by these means, thrown into associations, and exposed to temptations, which proved lamentably detrimental to the spirit of godliness. Not that Christian men ought altogether to retire from such offices, and leave public affairs to be guided and governed by the wicked. It is a question, however, whether they should ambitiously covet and seek them. If God in his providence calls them to such slippery places, and they give themselves to prayer to be kept from evil, and firmly maintain the integrity and consistency of the Christian character, they may, by their example and their influence, be great public blessings. But how difficult is this ! How few have surmounted the difficulty, and come unscathed from the conflict with the world in such scenes as these.

Let us now inquire what *is* the victory over the world of which the apostle speaks, and how it is to be obtained.

By what language shall we make this plain ? This is extremely difficult, since, as we have said, there is some attention and attachment which are legitimately indulged, and even commanded. But though there cannot be an entire disregard to the things of this world, there may be a *subordinate* one : and though also there cannot be an

exclusive regard to the things of the next world, there may be a *supreme* one. It is obvious there cannot be *two* supreme affections. Now a true Christian loves God in Christ supremely, for he is required to love him with all his heart, and soul, and mind. Consequently, the world is never conquered till the love of it is brought into subordination to this due regard to God. This *is* the victory—the supreme love of the world displaced by the supreme love of God. And then, as the love of God is in a real Christian the supreme *affection*; so a concern for salvation is the supreme *solicitude*: as in the former case, there may be many subordinate affections, so in the latter, there may be many subordinate anxieties; but that which controls the one is a higher regard to the claims of God, and that which controls the other is a higher regard to eternal salvation. Many no doubt have written and spoken on this subject, as if the love of God actually and entirely *extinguished* all other affections, instead of merely subordinating them: so much so that a considerate reader or hearer has said to himself, “Now that is strictly impossible,” or “absurd.” It is absolutely contrary to reason and disserviceable to religion to write and preach as if the world had no claims at all upon us. It *has* claims, and will make them good in defiance, whether allowed or not. They must be allowed, ought to be allowed. To attempt to render the heart insensible to them is to do violence to nature, without doing honour to grace. This is not merely to vanquish the foe and to take him captive, but it is to give no quarter, to murder, to annihilate him. This then is the victory over the world, to subordinate it to God.

This, however, is the lowest ground on which a man can justly deem himself a Christian. Surely no one can pretend to this character who has not this exalted and

supreme affection. Christ came "to redeem us from this present evil world;" but if the world has the government of our affections: if we are still enslaved by a supreme regard for it, where is the evidence of our redemption? Many persons profess to be in considerable doubt and perplexity as to the state of the case with them, whether or no, since they may love the world in measure, their love is supreme or subordinate. There ought to be no doubt here, and there would be none if there were more knowledge and more spirituality. The doubts of some professors ought to be certainty, but a certainty of the most fatal kind. The very careless, and unfeeling, unanxious manner in which they are expressed, too plainly show how well-founded they are. The doubts and fears of others, by the deep and trembling solicitude with which they are expressed, and the dread with which they are attended of the object concerning which they are felt, indicate that it is want of knowledge rather than of piety, to which they are to be traced. In most cases of comparison, the preference is a matter of prompt and unequivocal consciousness. And it should be so here. And why is it not? I would send the Christian to his Bible and his heart, with a sincere and earnest desire to know the meaning of the former and the state of the latter, and let him then attend to the following direction given by Foster in his Lecture on "The Supreme Attachment due to Spiritual Objects." "Let a man take the occasion to examine, when he is very strongly interested by some one temporal object or concern, whether he can say, more than *all this* is the interest I feel in '*the things that are above*.' When he is greatly pleased with some temporal possession, or success, or prospect, and his thoughts suddenly turn to the higher objects, is he then decidedly *more* pleased? or does

he feel a deep and earnest solicitude that this temporal good may not injure him in his higher interests? If he suffers or apprehends something very grievous as to his temporal interests, does he deliberately feel that he would far rather suffer *so*, than in his spiritual interests? Or again, in such a case, does he feel a strong overbalancing consolation from '*things above*?' Is he more pleased to give the earnest application of his mind to the higher objects and interests than to any inferior ones? (As a man digging in the confidence he should find gold, would labour with more soul and spirit than one raising stones or planting trees.) Does he feel that, on the whole, he would do more, or sacrifice more, for the one than for the other? While greatly interested in a temporal pursuit, does he habitually charge it upon his soul, and actually endeavour that he do with still greater intenseness prosecute a higher object? If he perceives that his pursuit of a temporal object is beginning to outrun (if we may so speak) his pursuit of the nobler, does he solemnly intermit in order that this may not be the case? 'How vigorously I am pursuing this—But what is *that* which I am leaving behind? If I leave *that* behind, it will stay! It will run no race with a worldly spirit. Let me instantly draw in!' Is he constantly, or very often, impelled to the divine throne to implore grace and strength that there may be a decided preponderance? the witness for him '*above*' that there is *that* proof at least of his affections there? If, by the advance of life, he is sensible that he is fast going out of the '*things on the earth*,' does he rise above all regret at this, in the view of the sublimer objects? 'Do you compassionate me because I am growing old—because I cannot stay long here? You mistake! Yonder is the scene to which I am animated in approaching.'

We will only add,—in his occupation and transactions with the '*things on the earth,*' has he acquired the habit of imparting even to those concerns a principle and a reference still bearing toward the higher objects?—Such questions as these would be the points for placing and keeping the subject in a state of trial and proof; would be an admonition, too, of the necessity of applying all the force in the higher direction."

I may put the matter also in another form. What is the object which a man *knows* he supremely desires, the blessings of salvation or the possessions of earth? Which of these yield him most delight? Which of these does he congratulate himself most upon possessing? Which does he consider his portion? Which, when the two come into collision, and he must imperil the one by sin, or the other by principle, is made to give way; will he give up religious principle for gain, or gain for religious principle? Which distresses him most in the fear of losing, his salvation or his property; and which loss does he deprecate with most intense dread? Which, in the usual pursuit of them, is he most afraid of displeasing—God, or his friends? Which habitually guides his thoughts and feelings, and moulds his character?

Now the victory over the world is, this subordination in the state of our mind, of the creature to the Creator; of earth to heaven; of temporal blessings to spiritual ones; of time to eternity. It is the formation of an unearthly, spiritual, divine, and heavenly character?

It may be proper to observe, that this victory does not refer exclusively to the subjugation of the world only in one of its shapes and modes of assault, but over them all. It is not a victory over covetousness, or the love of wealth merely; nor over a love of pleasure merely; nor over the

love of ambition only; but equally over the quiet and supreme love of our home comforts and dear relations. There may be, as I have already shown, the world in the house as well as in the shop. There is something so lovely in seeing a husband and a wife withdrawing from the gay circles of fashionable life, and in their sweet and quiet home, giving themselves up to the enjoyment of each others society, and the company of their children; putting out all their ingenuity to make that scene pleasant and to find their happiness upon their own domestic hearth, that one feels unwilling to write a syllable to its disparagement; but fidelity both to God and to them requires and demands that it should be said, that this is one form, though the purest of all, of the world; and even if that be loved more than God, a dark cloud of Divine displeasure covers the whole. The victory, in this case, is not gained, and the words of Scripture hold good there, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him:" and without the love of God, this lovely pair must be rejected from their paradise, under God's sentence of displeasure, as Adam and Eve were from theirs. Even into that scene Jesus Christ enters with the question, "Lovest thou me more than these?" Another remark which it is of importance to make is, that the Word of God speaks of a *victory* rather than an entire *conquest*. In the military tactics of earth this distinction is ever maintained. An enemy is often beaten when he is not conquered, and the hero that has defeated him may still, after he has gained one victory, have to fight for another. And, indeed, in reference to the same conflict, there may be the drawn battle—the victory but just won—the complete triumph—and the absolute rout and dispersion of the foe. There are all these varieties in the Christian's spiritual conflict with the world. This foe is never

entirely conquered till just before the victory is obtained over "the last enemy, which is death." The Christian's final triumph over the world is upon the borders of the grave, when he surrenders possessions, relatives, and even the very love of life itself, to the will of God, and feels the last remains of attachment to things seen and temporal, dissolving in the hope of things unseen and eternal. And before this final triumph, how various is the fight. In many cases it is almost a drawn battle. It is difficult almost to say whether he has subdued the world, or the world him. How little advantage does he seem to gain over his enemy. And where the advantage is on his side, how slight is it. In what strength does the foe yet remain. How his affections still cleave to things below ! How the cares, the comforts, and the snares of the world still beset him !

" How cold and feeble is his love,
How negligent his fear ;
How low his hopes of heaven above,
How few affections there."

If he is successful in keeping down the love of money, how difficult to keep down the love of home, and to keep up the love of Christ.

We now proceed to show *how faith acts so as to obtain this victory over the world.*

This is an interesting and important part of the subject, to every real Christian. He is aware of his danger from the strength, subtilty, and ever-present activity of this enemy of his soul. There is not, there cannot be, a true believer who is not aware of this. The man who feels careless, confident, and secure ; who is unapprehensive, un-anxious, unconcerned ; who sees no danger, and feels no alarm from the things of the world ; who gives himself to

unmolested ease and undisturbed enjoyment ; who wishes to be let alone to take his fill of pleasure or of comfort ; and desires to have no idea of peril and to hear no call to arms and to conflict, cannot be a Christian. He is one of those of whom the apostle speaks, "*Who mind earthly things.*" The sincere and devout believer, on the contrary, is sensible of his perilous condition. "The world," he says, sometimes in alarm amounting to distress, "the world is my great foe under which I sometimes fear I may sink vanquished, and lose my portion in the next state, by undue attention to the concerns of this. I am sometimes in danger from business, at others from domestic ease ; and at others from anxiety. I find the love of things seen and temporal creeping over me, and enfeebling all my religious principles. Tell me, O tell me, how I may best resist and overcome this foe."

Not, of course, by retiring from it into monasteries and convents ; as some devotees do. This is not to conquer the enemy, but to flee from him ; a cowardly retreat, in which there is neither piety nor virtue.

Nor will troubles always do it. Afflictions, no doubt, have been in some cases, sanctified for this end ; and sufferers in the dark season of their woe, when the objects of their regard have been removed from them, have learnt by bitter experience how foolish and vain it was to set their affections on things below. At the grave of a friend, amidst the wreck of their fortunes, or in the chamber of sickness, the mask of the gay deceiver has fallen off, and the world has stood before them a convicted cheat. In some cases disgust with life has followed, and the poor wretched victim of disappointment has exclaimed, "It is better for me to die than to live, for there is not now a single object upon earth to make existence any longer de-

sirable." This is being conquered by grief, instead of conquering the world. There are, however, better cases than this, of really sanctified worldly trials. There have been Christians, and others, whose trials have been eminently blessed to their souls—whose graces never appeared in vigour while the sun of prosperity was shining upon them, but which came out upon their darkened skies, like stars upon the brow of night. They say with the Psalmist, "It was good for me to be afflicted, for before I was afflicted, I went astray." But this is not always the case. In most instances the loss of one worldly possession only makes the heart cling closer to those that are left. Instead of repairing to the fountain when one cistern is broken, they set themselves busily to hew out another, or go to some other which is still left. It may be salutary to remind those who need the caution, not to trust to the season and hours of affliction, for they may never come. God may give them up to unsanctified prosperity. He may in anger say, "They are tied to their idols, let them alone." Besides, shall we tempt God to wean us in this way from the world? Shall we provoke him to remove from us objects that have alienated us from him? Shall we place him under a kind of necessity to save our souls by taking away the snares that endanger them? Shall we choose *this* way of gaining the victory? I know this is infinitely better than losing our souls. Yes, better be stripped of all, and become poor as Job upon the dunghill, than come short of eternal life: but is there not a more excellent way—a way more dignified, more consonant with our comfort, more pleasing to God, more effectual in itself? There is. "*This is the victory that overcometh the world, EVEN OUR FAITH.*" Yes, our faith. This is a weapon that suits all hands, and is adapted to all occasions. In

whatever form, or in whatever force, the foe advances, this can meet him and defeat him. By this, martyrs have triumphed, when he came armed with all the terrors of the scaffold and the stake. By this, kings, men of wealth, and persons of renown, have triumphed, when the enemy came arrayed with smiles, caresses, and blandishments. By this, men of business have triumphed, when he came dexterously wielding corrupt principles, maxims, and examples. Turn to the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, that trophy-house of the Church, and see how this mighty weapon gained the victories there recorded.

But still, we have not pointed out in what lies the power of faith for this purpose.

Faith conquers by recognising a new authority. The world, with the authority of a king, ruler, and master, exercises dominion over the souls of its vassals. With the voice of command it says, "Yield allegiance to me." It asserts its right to govern, and the soul of the worldly concedes the right and obeys; and his servant he is whom he obeys. But faith believes in God and in Christ. The Christian sees that the world is not only a tyrant, but an usurper. He realises the fact of the Lordship of Christ, and transfers his allegiance to him. "Other lords have had dominion over me," says he, "but by thee only will I be called." He breaks the yoke off from his neck, and takes up that of Christ. Christ says to him, "Love not the world—love me. If any man love father or mother; son or daughter; houses or lands, more than me, he is not worthy of me." "I yield," says the Christian, "I believe that thou art my Lord." The whole current of Scripture commands runs against the love of the world. In every possible form it is forbidden. Precept after precept is delivered against it, and faith recognises the rightful

authority of them. Christian, open thine ears and hear, the voice of authority follows thee every where, forbidding a supreme regard to the objects of time and sense. In the house—in the shop—in the place of enjoyment—in social scenes—in solitary contemplation upon thy possessions—in the beautiful scenery of nature—this voice is ever saying, "*Love not the world.*"

2. But authority is somewhat stern, and there requires something more soft and tender to overcome the world; and therefore faith exhibits new and superior objects of contemplation and affection. There is of course some glory in the things of the world, and the mind will be enamoured of this till a superior glory is seen. Glow-worms are bright in the absence of the moon and the stars; and the moon and the stars, in the absence of the sun. But when the great luminary rises, how glow-worms, and stars, and moon, all disappear, lost in the blaze of his meridian glory. So it is with the world—how important—how beautiful—how glorious it is, while the soul sees not the spiritual objects of the Word of God. What is there better or brighter to the worldling *than* the world? Consequently his whole soul is engrossed by this. It is his all. But when faith comes, a new world, and what a world, opens to his view. A man coming up from the mines, who had all his life lived there, and knowing nothing better than the objects he had seen below the earth, all at once beholding the glorious sun and a beautiful landscape, does not experience a transition really greater than that of the Christian who has seen nothing, known nothing, but worldly things, and who at length comes by faith to look at things spiritual and eternal. But what are these objects that by an irresistible attraction draw away his heart from the world? There is the moral character of

God in the harmony and glory of his perfections. What an object this! How the believer delights to meditate upon God. His desire is to him, and the remembrance of his name. He had heard of God before, he now rejoices in him. But it is God in Christ that may be said to be the especial object of faith. Hence, the noble and sacred enthusiasm of the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."—Gal. vi, 14. How many have repeated the same, and added the words of the poet.

"It was the sight of thy dear cross
First wean'd my soul from earthly things,
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings."

It is not for the dark mind of the worldling, and scarcely for the lukewarm professor, to imagine the glory which an enlightened and warm-hearted believer sees in the cross of Christ. How all the splendour of earthly things pales before that infinitely more resplendent object. It rises upon the soul like another sun, bright in itself, and diffusing its lustre over every thing else upon which it shines. With that stupendous object is connected the brightest manifestation of the Divine character, in harmony with the sinner's salvation. There is the central point of the Divine administration in creation, providence, and redemption. On that tree of death to the Saviour, but of life to the sinner, grow the fruits of eternal mercy—the blessings of grace and glory. There are pardon, peace, holiness, and eternal life. All this is realised by faith, and only thus. How the world fades into darkness, and dwindles to an almost invisible point before that object. The true believer often contemplates the end of the world,

and the scenes of judgment. "He represents to himself, the vision (not from a melancholy fancy, or crazed brain, but from a rational faith, and a sober, well-instructed mind,) of the world dissolving, monarchies and kingdoms breaking up, thrones trembling, crowns and sceptres lying as neglected things. He hath a telescope through which he can behold the glorious appearance of the Supreme Judge; the solemn state of his majestic person; the splendid pomp of his magnificent and vastly numerous retinue; the obsequious throng of glorious and celestial creatures doing homage to the Eternal King; the swift flight of his royal guards, sent forth into the four winds to gather the elect, and covering the face of the heavens with their spreading wings; the universal silent attention of all, to that loud sounding trumpet that shakes the pillars of the world, pierces the inward caverns of the earth, and resounds from every part of the encircling heavens; the many myriads of joyful expectants arising, changing, putting on glory, taking wing, and contending upwards to join themselves to the triumphant heavenly host; the judgment set; the books opened; the frightful amazed looks of surprised wretches; the adjudication of all to their eternal states; 'The heavens rolled up as a scroll; the earth and all things that are therein consumed and burnt up.' All this is seen by faith, through the telescope of the Scriptures. And now what spirit when he sees this, is there more left in the Christian towards the trivial affairs of this vanishing world. Though he will not neglect the duty of his own place, he is heartily concerned to have the knowledge and fear of God more generally obtained in this apostate world; and is ready to contribute his utmost regular endeavours for the preservation of common peace and order in suberviency thereunto; yet abstractedly from these consider-

ations, he is no more concerned who is uppermost, than one would passing by a swarm of flies, which hath the longest wings, or which excels the rest in sprightliness and briskness of motion.”*

Nor is this all, for faith realises the glory of an eternal world. It believes the *certainty* of another world. The true Christian no longer clings to this world, because he has nothing better to grasp—no longer feeds upon husks, because he knows not where to obtain bread. He believes in heaven and eternity. These objects are matters of belief, not of speculation; substantial realities, not airy visions. He says, “I *know* in whom I have believed, and that I am not following cunningly devised fables.” I am standing upon a rock, not quicksand. And as faith realises the certainty, so it does the *glory* of the eternal world. “Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.” The representations of the celestial world contained in the Scriptures have a magnificence about them, which, though but as a dazzling object seen through a dim transparency, shine into darkness all the brightest objects of sense. The latter to the former are like a dim taper held up amidst the effulgence of a mid-day sun.

3. But faith produces a new affection, as well as recognises new objects. It not only sees these objects, but seeing them, desires them—loves them—enjoys them. Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. There is a new life, love, taste, brought into the soul by faith. One love is supplanted by another love. Make a new bed for a river, deeper and wider than its former one, and the stream will instantly leave its old channel, and flow in the new one. Religion is not all intellect—contemplation—but it is also affection. The faith which perceives these

* Howe on the “Vanity of Man as Mortal.”

new objects works by love. It embraces these, and lets go the other. The heart that once was under the power of a supreme love to the world, comes under the influence of a supreme love to God. And there is no love apart from faith. It is its genuine fruit, which grows on no other stock. We do, we shall, we must love the world, till this divine principle gives us something better to love. The soul of the unrenewed man is blind to the beauty of spiritual objects, and therefore loves them not, but being spiritually illumined, to see not only their reality, but their excellence, he now turns away from the poor, meagre, unsatisfying things of earth and sense, to the more precious and glorious things of God, Christ, heaven, and eternity.

4. Faith, by uniting the soul to Christ, derives grace and strength for the conflict and the victory. It is not by his own power—the vigour of his intellect—the inflexibility of his purpose—the deductions of his reason, that he gains advantage over the world: these are all employed because religion is the habit of a rational creature; but it is his vital union with the Saviour that gives him the victory. He is a branch in the living vine—a member of the mystical body; and is ever deriving influence from Christ, its fountain and source. He is “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” He is powerful, through the grace that is in Christ Jesus. “Be of good cheer,” saith he, “I have overcome the world.”—John xvi, 33. But what is this to us? Suppose a giant should say to a little child, trembling in front of a lion, “Do not be afraid: I have overcome a lion.” “Ah,” says the little creature, “but what is that to me? Will you slay the animal for me?” “I will,” he answers, “depend upon *me*.” Now this is Christ’s meaning. “I have overcome the world not for my sake only, but for yours.

I have, by conquering the world, not only set the example, but obtained the means for you to conquer it too." Through all this mighty conflict, the believer keeps his eye fixed on Christ, not only to see what he did, but to derive, from what he did, all grace to do likewise. He says to us, "Do not be afraid of the world. It is not an invincible enemy. It has been conquered. *I* have overcome it; so may you. I did it for you, and have weakened its power. You fight with a wounded, beaten foe. Believe in me. My victory shall insure yours."

But here two things must be mentioned.

First. It must be a real, and not a mere nominal faith, to achieve this victory. It is not enough to *say* you have faith. It is not a verbal assent—a hereditary or educational faith—a cold opinion—a notion, or what the Scripture calls a *dead faith*; which, in fact, is no faith at all. It must be a faith of the heart—of the operation of the Spirit—a real, practical conviction of the truth of the gospel. A belief that answers to the apostle's definition, "Which is the *confidence* of things hoped for, the *conviction* of things not seen." This will enable us to meet an objection made sometimes to our whole statement of this subject: "We do not see those who profess to have this principle, gaining the victory over the world." True: and just because they are professors only, but not partakers of this grace. Theirs, in many cases, is but the dead faith of a dead soul.

Secondly. This victory will be obtained only in proportion to the strength and degree of the faith that gains it. We have already observed, that victory is a thing of proportion, from the merely maintaining of our ground, to a complete conquest. Now this holds good here. A feeble belief will only just enable the Christian to avoid being

completely beaten by the world. And we see many in this condition. Here is a professor, of whom we cannot but hope the root of the matter is in him. He is upon the whole, though not wholly, a Christian. There is so much of worldliness mixed up with his affections and pursuits, that it is sometimes difficult either for himself or his friends to ascertain the reality of his religion. Now, how is this? Just because his belief of Divine truth is so feeble. Here is another who has many distinguished excellences; many graces of the Christian character; much spirituality, meekness, and general good conduct; but he is sadly deficient in liberality: he has a tendency to covetousness; he loves his money too much. How comes this? And it is by no means an uncommon thing in the church of Christ. Why, his faith is weak. He does not believe what God says about money with the strength of conviction he should do. The victory will, and must be gained, in proportion to the means of gaining it: so that if the foe gain the advantage over us in *any* one particular, or in any one degree, it is because in that one particular or degree we are deficient in this sound practical belief.

Let us then engage in this part of the Christian life with sincere intentions; deep seriousness; and intense earnestness. Of the three great enemies of our souls, the world, the flesh, and the devil, while we are in danger from all, we are, I repeat, most in danger of the first. It is the most decent and the most trodden path to hell. It is a path not only through the wilderness without the church, but through the very garden of that sacred enclosure: a path not only thronged by those who make no profession, but by those who do: a path which if it be strewed with flowers, leads like every other to perdition, and ends in the bitter pains of eternal death.

You might be entreated, as a guard against this sin of worldliness, to consider the short-lived existence, as well as unsatisfying nature, of all earthly things. It would be well for you to ponder the question of the prophet to some of old, "And where will ye leave your glory?"—Isaiah x, 3. Yes, it must all be left, whatever it be you gain, whether wealth, honour, or relations, it must all be left. Oh, that you would consider and say, as you look round upon the various objects of your pursuits, "Why am I so anxious to get what I must leave eventually, and may leave soon? This, and this, is what I am to *leave*. It has no one relation to me so positive as *this*, that *I shall leave it*. So near as I am now to it, I may the next moment come to behold it at an infinite distance: and so dear and important as it is now felt to be to me, to-morrow it may be absolutely nothing to me: and when I have left it, what consequence will it be to me, who is the person that rushes across my fresh grave to seize it?' Yes, rich men must leave their glory. Where? where? Why often to the curses of the poor—the extravagance of the gay—and the greedy joy of heirs, that care not though they are lifting up their eyes in torments, the subjects of

'That loudest laugh of hell—
The pride of dying rich.' **

Open the grave, examine skeletons, there is no distinction there. Skulls wear neither diadems of gold, nor wreaths of honour. Bones retain not vests of purple and gold: or if they did, how worthless a consideration is this to the spirits once associated with them, whether they be in heaven or in hell.

But we choose rather to direct your attention to the

* See a striking Lecture on this text in "Foster's Second Series."

cultivation of a stronger faith in God—in Christ—in heaven—in eternity. Faith is a mightier conqueror of the world than even death. We shall do far more to gain the victory by looking up into heaven than by looking down into the grave. The glories of the one will do more to draw us away from earth, than the terrors of the other to drive us. We must be allured not terrified, to that brighter and better world, which is attracting to itself all that is holy in this. We must place ourselves more habitually in that part of the temple of inspiration where the Holy Spirit has lavished the riches of his wisdom, in depicting the glory to be revealed, and feel our love, and hope, and enjoyment, of earthly things die away within us, in the vision and anticipation of heavenly ones. We must not only fancy ourselves looking out of our graves upon those things which now so absorb and please us, but looking down upon them from the celestial sphere of glorified immortals. Time must be redeemed from things seen and temporal, to meditate upon things unseen and eternal. We must resist an encroaching world, and eluding its grasp, enter into our closet, and shut the door, and commune with our Father who seeth in secret. We must thus increase our faith. Nothing else will give us the victory, and this will.

CHAPTER VII.

FAITH IN PRAYER.

“*The Prayer of Faith.*” How simple an expression ; yet how impressive ! How beautiful the words ; how mighty the thing ! What has not the prayer of faith done ? How great the wonders it has wrought, how numerous and how splendid the victories it has won ! “It has subdued kingdoms ; wrought righteousness ; obtained promises ; stopped the mouths of lions ; quenched the violence of fire ; escaped the edge of the sword ; out of weakness was made strong ; waxed valiant in fight ; turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” These are only part, and a small part of its achievements, for it has stopped the sun in his course ; opened and shut heaven ; performed miracles without number ; and raised to heaven countless millions of immortal souls, once sunk in sin, under the power of Satan. Nothing seems too hard or too difficult for prayer to do. It has a kind of omnipotence ; for it moves the hand that moves all things. All Scripture is full of injunctions, directions, examples, encouragements, and promises, in reference to this exercise. The Bible is “The Book of Common Prayer” for the universal church ; the Liturgy for “the communion of all saints.” How interesting a theme ! And how important we should thoroughly understand it. We bring into this subject two distinct things, faith *and* prayer ; we unite them together, and consider faith *in* prayer. Though distinct, they are inseparable :

there can be no true prayer without faith—there can be no true faith without prayer. They are the two arms by which the soul hangs upon the neck of infinite love, and grasps the hand of omnipotent power. Or to adopt another figure: they are in the new creature, what the *organ* of speech, and its utterance, are in the human body. Faith is the spiritual organism of the soul's power of language in prayer, and prayer is the emission of its spiritual articulate sounds. There is no dumb faith—no dead prayer.

It is not necessary to dwell on prayer, either as an incumbent duty, or a precious privilege. It is felt by the true Christian to be both. All the children of God, in whatever else they differ, are alike in this respect. From the moment there is any life in religion they pray. Just as the first sign of life in an infant when born into the world, is the act of breathing, so the first act of men and women, when they are born again, is praying. And it is as much a part of their new nature to pray, as it is of a child to cry. God has no dumb children. And to carry on this homely figure, as diseased lungs in the human frame, bring on decay, consumption, and death, so in the soul's economy, neglect of prayer is a spiritual decline. The *purposes* of prayer are various—it is the homage of a dependent creature paid to the author of its being, and the source of its happiness—it has a moral reflex influence on the soul of him that presents it, making him the holier by his own devotions—it is a relief and comfort to the troubled soul—it is the intercourse and communion of the regenerated soul with its Divine Parent—and it is God's own instituted means of obtaining blessings from him the Fountain of life. *All* these ends and purposes should be contemplated by the Christian, and not merely the latter

one. It is an exercise of wonderful comprehension. The *conditions* of prevailing prayer are numerous and impressive. It must be sincere—we must really be desirous to obtain the blessings we ask: it must be holy—for if we “regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us:” it must be godly—seeking to obtain blessings, not for our own gratification merely, but for God’s glory: it must be importunate—for it is the effectual, fervent, prayer of a righteous man, that prevaieth: it must be submissive—asking only for what it is God’s will to bestow: it must be in charity—for if our brother hath aught against us, we must first go and be reconciled to our brother: it must be reverent—for our God is a consuming fire: it must be humble—for we are mean, and sinful, and unworthy to lift up our eyes to heaven: it must be persevering—for men ought always to pray, and not to faint: it must be particular—for generalities mean little or nothing: it must be universal—entering into every thing, all the concerns of life, all the means of grace: it must be of all kinds—social, domestic, private, ejaculatory: it must be grateful—abounding in thanksgiving: it must be expectant—waiting and watching for answers: and it must be believing—we must ask in faith.

The most superficial reader of his Bible cannot fail to observe how these two, faith and prayer, are associated in the Word of God. When the blind, the lame, and the diseased, came to Christ for healing, he constantly reminded them their requests could not be complied with unless they *believed*. “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” was his question: “Only believe,” was his direction. So, in speaking of prayer, “Jesus answered and said unto them, verily I say unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but

also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive."—Matt. xxi, 21, 22. True, this refers to the work of miracles, but the *principle* that this state of mind is necessary to prevailing prayer, is as true and as applicable to ordinary matters, as to these displays of Divine power. These two, then, must ever be united in our requests to God. They are born together. When a sinner is brought by grace to believe, he is at the same time brought to pray: the first acting of the new life of grace is believing prayer. They grow together. Belief strengthens prayer: prayer re-acts upon believing, and strengthens it. They die together. The last act of the believer is the last act of prayer; when faith is turned into sight, and prayer ends in uninterrupted eternal praise.

But what is the precise influence of faith in prayer?

Perhaps the best way of entering upon this subject, is to explain the words of the apostle James in reference to this matter: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."—James i, 5-7. By wisdom in this passage, we are to understand that of which the apostle speaks in chap. iii; "The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy:" that is, Divine grace to enable the tried believers to endure afflictions, and to conduct themselves aright as professing Christians, in the afflictive situations in which they were placed. This they

all needed, and for this they were to pray to God, who was ever most ready to give in any measure they needed, without reproving them for their spiritual poverty, or rebuking them for the frequency or fervency of their petitions, as men are apt to do. But then, they were to ask in faith; that is, having a full persuasion that they not only needed this Divine help, but that they could most lawfully ask it as a thing very proper to be carried to God in prayer; that God would be pleased with their asking for it; would hear their prayers, and grant them their petition in reference to that very thing. There was to be no "*wavering*;" no doubt about their need of the blessing; nor about the propriety of praying for it; nor about the certainty of God's hearing their prayer; nor about their right to expect the blessing. There was to be nothing at all resembling the frame of mind of a man hesitating about going for a favour to a fellow-creature. "Shall I go, or shall I not? Will he hear me and grant me the thing I want, or will he not. Sometimes I think I will go, and then I resolve *not* to go. At one time I am full of fear, and at another of hope." Now this is "*wavering*," to which there must be nothing like in the frame of a believer's heart towards God in prayer. Such a man is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind now one way, now another, without stability. Such a man is not authorised to expect an answer to his prayers. He is a double-minded man, or, as the word signifies, a two-souled man; one soul of faith, another of unbelief. In opposition to this, there must be the one-mindedness of faith—a firm persuasion that we are warranted both to ask and to expect this very thing.

The subject may be divided into two parts; in the FIRST, we may speak of it generally, or in reference to prayer at large.

1. We may advert to the rule of prayer. This is the Word of God, especially the promises. These are the rule, the ground, the warrant of prayer. We may ask for every thing God has promised; for nothing he has not promised, either in a general or specific manner, to bestow. "Remember the word on which thou hast caused thy servant to hope," must be our plea in approaching the throne of grace. These promises, which are the rule of prayer, are of course equally the rule of faith; and if we do not believe them, we cannot ask for their fulfilment; but if we do, we can. To ask God for a blessing, of which we do not believe the promise, is a mockery. "*May* I ask for what I want?" is the enquiry of the Christian in a time of necessity. "Is it promised?" he further asks. "It is," replies his faith, "believe in God's Word." "Then I will carry the matter to God," he continues, "and ask with an expectation that I shall receive it."

2. But we are not only to believe in God as the object of prayer, but in Christ as the medium. He is the way, and the only way, to the Father. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession,"—and "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Heb. iv, 14, 16. "Having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."—x, 21. This also is the meaning of that sublime and beautiful symbol in the opening of the eighth chapter of the Apocalypse, where the angel is seen standing with his golden censer at the altar, that with much incense he should offer the prayers of all saints. That august personage is the Angel of the Covenant, even our Lord Jesus Christ; who by his intercession, of which the incense was

the emblem, secures the acceptance of the prayers of his believing people. Prayer is acceptable only as offered in his name: and it is the office of faith to realise this glorious fact. While he opens his mouth in supplication and pours out his petitions, the Christian keeps his mind steadily fixed on the Mediator of the New Covenant. He wishes for nothing, asks for nothing, expects nothing, but for Christ's sake: he desires that he should have the glory of presenting his prayers *to* God, and obtaining his blessings *from* God. The prayers of a whole congregation sent up by assembled multitudes, amidst the most gorgeous rites, which are not offered through the mediation of Christ, would be shut out of heaven; while those of a poor peasant from his hut, or of a little child from his bed side, would gain a ready entrance, through Him.

3. But Christian belief leaves not out the work of the Holy Spirit in prayer: for what saith the Scripture, "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."—Rom. viii, 26, 27. So also Jude says, "Praying in the Holy Ghost." The Spirit has much to do with acceptable prayer, and his work in prayer is too much neglected. He enlightens the mind to see its wants—softens the heart to feel them—quicken our desires after suitable supplies—gives clear views of God's power, wisdom, and grace to relieve us, and stirs up that confidence in his truth which excludes all wavering. Prayer is, therefore, a wonderful thing. In every single acceptable prayer the whole Trinity is concerned.

It is thus the whole business of prayer is carried on. The Christian believes that there is a God who taketh interest in the affairs of man, else there would be no ground to pray to him at all. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."—Heb. xi, 6. He believes that God regards his people individually, else there would be no ground or encouragement for individual prayer. A mere general providence would be no motive to individual trust and prayer. He believes that God is able to hear and answer the prayers of all who call upon him, according to the declaration of the apostle, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."—Ephes. iii, 20. Here is the pillar and prop of all prayer. "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." The believer sees the arm of Omnipotence stretched out, and is moved to lay hold by prayer of God's strength. And while he recognises his omnipotent arm, he no less beholds his omniscient eye. Were not God all knowing, he could not be the object of prayer. Of what use would it be to pray to one who seeth us not? But his infinite intelligence is the ground of our confidence. He looketh upon millions with as perfect a comprehension of their whole case, as he looketh upon one. He searcheth the heart, as well as beholdeth the life; and knoweth our thoughts, as well as heareth our words. The groaning that cannot be uttered he interprets, and heareth the silent petition that is ejaculated from the praying heart. Whether the prayer be presented in the solitude of the vast desert, or amidst the haunts of the crowded city, his eye is upon the petitioner: and the Christian believes this.

The Christian believes that God has instituted prayer, and is therefore ever ready to hear and answer it. "O

thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come," is one of the encouraging views which are given of God in his Word. The Christian knows that every part of the Bible testifies this fact, that God has instituted prayer, that it is one of the most prominent duties of religion, as laid down in the Scriptures, and that therefore he is not only performing his duty in presenting it, but that it is one of the most striking proofs of rebelling against God to neglect it. Knowing all this, he is confident in the use of prayer; he steps firmly, and goes boldly, in approaching the throne of grace. He has neither difficulty, diffidence, nor doubt in his mind, in drawing near to God. He feels that it is a part of the glory by which God will be known as the hearer of prayer, and says to himself, "Has he not these thousands of years been hearing and answering the addresses of his people; and can I doubt whether he will receive mine?"

The Christian believes that God will hear and answer *his* prayers. There is no true faith at all which is not personal, individual, appropriating. We are, in the business of salvation, not only believers that Christ died for sinners, but that he died for *us*. We are to apply the general fact to our own particular case. There can be no genuine belief without this: which stops not in generals, but descends to particulars. He who does not believe that Christ died for *him*, cannot believe that Christ died for all, for he himself is one of the all. So in the after-exercises of true belief, and especially in the case before us, it is a part of faith in prayer, to be assured God will hear *us*: that there is nothing in our case, which, provided we perform the conditions of prevailing prayer, should shut *us* out from the presence, the throne, the ear, and the hand of God. It is one of the exercises of this confidence to

say, "Sinful though I be—mean and unworthy of Divine notice, yet I am warranted to approach with *my* prayer to God, as truly as the most distinguished of all the servants of God. 'Remember *me*, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest to thy people; O visit *me* with thy salvation: that *I* may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.'"—Psalm cvi, 4, 5.

Before we quit this part of the subject, it is of importance to remark, that much of true faith in prayer lies in expecting the answer of our requests. Perhaps there is no part of our duty in which we are more deficient than in this. If we are warranted to ask for any thing, we surely are authorised to expect it. We shall point out the limitations of this, when we come to speak of prayer for a specific object. At present we dwell upon it generally. If prayer mean any thing, it intends that we should be heard, and answered; and not to look for the answer is to turn the petition into a mockery of God. "There is no surer mark of trifling in prayer, than when men are careless what they get by prayer." There are three classes of persons who are deficient in this duty of *expectation*. *First*, those whose supplications are mere forms, or so vague and general as to have little or no meaning. How many are there, who, if when they rise from their knees, they were to ask themselves the question, "What have I been asking of God?" would not be able to reply. No answer can be expected here, for no petition was really presented. *Secondly*, those who have really asked for some specific object, but who go away and forget their own requests. *Thirdly*, they who do not forget, and are not careless, but are doubtful, unbelieving, distrustful. If they do not believe they shall have an answer,

why do they ask? David said, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and *will look up*."—Psalm v, 3. Let us do likewise, and do with our prayers, as merchants do who send their ships to sea, and who look for their return laden with a precious and profitable cargo. Such, then, is the office of faith in prayer, viewed generally.

SECONDLY. We may now consider it in a specific reference to some particular object—some blessing which we are anxious to obtain, and for which we feel warranted to ask.

We are now supposing the case of a believer who is oppressed with a sense of some great want, which he is impelled to make the matter of earnest prayer, and it may be asked if faith in this case means a persuasion that he shall receive *the very thing* that he prays for, whether it be for a temporal blessing or a spiritual one? In other words, are we to understand that declaration literally, and without limitation or exception, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive."—Matt. xxi, 22. In reference to that particular declaration, we would remark that it refers, as the context proves, to miracles, and meant that those to whom this gift was imparted would, if they felt prompted to work a miracle, and had faith to believe they should do it, have power in every instance given them to perform it, in answer to believing prayer. The passage so explained does not therefore apply in its literal meaning to the ordinary experiences of the Christian life. But we will here refer to a remark laid down in a previous part of this chapter, which must be ever borne in mind, the rule of faith is the rule of prayer; and as this, in every case, is the belief of something that God has said, and in the case of a blessing, something he has promised, so in prayer it cannot be exercised in

reference to any particular blessing so as to assure us it shall be given, unless that very blessing is actually promised. Some things are promised generally, and our belief of them must have the same general form; while others are promised specially, and these must be looked for specially. Faith does not mean an impression of any thing upon our mind, however strong, but a belief of something that God has said. We may now go on to take up the question of faith in prayer for particular blessings.

1. We will view it in reference to *spiritual* blessings. These, be it observed, are promised specifically, that is to say, they, the very blessings themselves, are promised to every one who seeks them aright. Suppose the case of a penitent praying for the pardon of his sins, he is to ask for that blessing with a full confidence it will be given him. He has no need to qualify and guard his petition with such conditions as, "If it be good for him to receive it, and for God's glory to impart it;" for it *is* good for him, and for God's glory. God has promised that very blessing. He has again and again repeated the promise, and there ought to be neither doubt nor hesitation about the ability or willingness of God to bestow it. The petitioner is to have confidence in God for *that* blessing, and faith in prayer is in this case an assurance that this blessing will be bestowed. So also, of praying for the Holy Spirit to sanctify, to comfort, to strengthen for all the duties of the Christian life. *This* blessing is promised to every one who seeketh, and the believer seeking Divine influence by prayer should expect it: his confidence in reference to this matter means his casting out all doubts and fears, and his looking for that very thing. So likewise of prayer for Divine help against any temptation, however strong, God has engaged to assist us, and we should pray for aid

with a persuasion we shall have it. In cases of perplexity as to the path of duty, if there be a sincere desire to do the will of God, apart from all personal, selfish, and sinful considerations, we may be assured we shall be guided aright. When greatly afflicted, we should pray for Divine support and consolation, being assured that if really willing to be comforted and sustained, we shall have the very blessing. To pray and not expect to be answered, in all such cases as these, is to pray in unbelief. And this is really a very sinful state of mind, and exceedingly displeasing to God. When by promise and by covenant he has engaged to bestow upon us such blessings—when he has given up his Son to die upon the cross to bestow them upon us—it must be a great transgression against his truth, his power, and his love, to question whether if we pray for them we shall receive them.

2. But in regard to *temporal* blessings, faith in prayer must be a somewhat different exercise. By temporal blessings are meant health; prosperity in business; our own life, and the life of our friends; deliverance out of any particular exigency; preservation from danger in travelling; and a variety of other things. All these it is quite clear, may be made matter of prayer. The apostle's language is very explicit, striking, and encouraging, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."—Phil. iv, 6. The antithesis between the "being careful for nothing," and the "every thing by prayer" is most impressive, teaching that we are not to allow the *greatest* thing to make us careful, and we are to carry the *least* to God by prayer. O that we knew, valued, and improved this blessed privilege! But what is faith in reference to these things? Certainly not a persuasion we

shall have the very thing, without any condition. For where has God promised when we are in sickness we shall certainly recover? Or that every lawful scheme of industry shall succeed? Or that our friend for whose life we pray shall recover? Or that in travelling we shall never meet with an accident? We have not the promise we shall have these *very* blessings, and therefore we can have no certain belief that they will certainly come, even in answer to prayer. But is there then no room for *any* faith in such prayers, and in reference to such things? Unquestionably there is. We are to believe that God authorises us to pray for such matters—that he will hear the prayers we present, and not drive us in our troubles from his presence, saying, “Bring not such matters here,”—that he will accept the very act of presenting our supplications unto him with favour, as an act of homage to himself—that he will in some way answer our prayers, if not in the letter, yet in the spirit; if not by giving us the thing we ask, bestowing upon us something better. God takes his own time, and his own manner, in answering our prayers: and as regards temporal favours, has reserved to himself these two conditions—if they are for our spiritual good, and for his own glory. Here is room, ample and delightful room, for faith in prayer, in reference to temporal blessings, without supposing we shall have in every case the very things we ask for; here is a firm, a tranquillizing, a joyful assurance, that God will hear our prayers, and give the very blessing we ask, if it be for our good and for his own glory, and a belief that it will not be given, yea, a wish that it may not, unless on these conditions. Who could desire it to be otherwise? Who would ask to be left at the mercy of their own prayers? Who would not be afraid to pray for *any* temporal blessing at all, if God

took off these checks to our petitions, these guards of our welfare? This is the duty enjoined by the apostle James, in reference to temporal blessings, to believe that God does so conduct himself, that he acts upon the principle of granting only what he sees best and fittest to be given. This is a confidence in his wisdom, love, faithfulness, and power, all at once. It is a noble exercise of trust to carry the dearest object of our affection to him, and laying it down before his throne to say, "Lord, grant me this, if it be thy will, and if not, I entirely confide in thy glorious perfections that it will be right to deny me."

3. But there is another class of cases, I mean such as relate to spiritual blessings for others. Christian parents are anxious, or should be deeply so, for the salvation of their children; and as one way of expressing their solicitude, they pray for them: ought they in such prayer to believe that every one of them will be really converted to God? Before we come to that point, let us enquire whether we have any rule for our expectation in such a case? Now we have, undoubtedly, *some* declarations. "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."—Gen. xvii, 7. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring, and they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the water courses."—Isaiah xlv, 3-4. "Thou shalt be saved and thy house."—Acts xvi, 31. "Ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."—Ephes. vi, 4. Now though these declarations are certainly somewhat vague and general, yet they encourage a hope of saving results: so far as to warrant an expectation of the conversion of such children to God; and the

prayer for their conversion ought to be presented in something of a pleasing belief that God will hear our prayers, and grant his grace upon our efforts. But then consider what these prayers for their conversion imply. They must proceed from a heart that really desires and longs for their conversion. It must not be a mere article in the domestic creed and economy, that the children of the godly should themselves become godly; but it should be an intense yearning—a longing in some measure proportioned to the object itself. Their conversion must be the first object concerning them, to which all others must be subordinated. This object must be sought by all the appropriate means of religious training. Every thing must be done that would conduce to their conversion to God, and every thing kept away that would hinder it. There must not only be instruction, but in the fullest sense of the term, education. The character must be formed; and in order to this, the parent must present a model of exemplary piety in himself. And with these conditions, the father may go and pray for his children's conversion, and expect their conversion. Prayers so presented and so followed up, will very generally be answered. It is, no doubt, a fact that very many *do* pray and see comparatively little result of their prayers—their children do not become godly. Why? I would by no means suggest that it is in *all* cases to be traced up to parental neglect. I would not pour vinegar upon the wounds of many a lacerated heart, bleeding under the misconduct of a prodigal son, by asserting that parental sins have led to this; but at the same time, there can be little doubt of the general principle, that religious training, carried on from the dawn of reason, through childhood and youth, with judgment, uniformity, consistency, and affection, enforced by an eminently holy and consistent

example, and sanctified by believing prayer, would be followed in *most* cases with the blessed result of their conversion to God. To pray with expectation of a favourable result, when none of the conditions of prevailing prayer in such cases have been complied with, is but presumption. It is true, God does sometimes in sovereignty answer prayers where these conditions have been neglected, or at any rate bestow the blessings thus asked; but he has not bound himself to answer them.

Still, it must be admitted, there are cases which perplex and puzzle us, of children converted to God, whose parents, if they prayed for them at all, neither took pains to educate them religiously, nor ever expected, nor scarcely wished their conversion; while on the other hand, there are young persons who have enjoyed the best religious culture, but who never come under the influence of true religion, and that too while other members of the same family did. Such instances go to prove that a *general* faith, giving rise to a lively hope of their conversion, a pleasing expectation of it, is all that we are warranted to indulge, without going so far as to say, "I am sure that *all* my children will be ultimately brought to God." Has God in any case promised to any one that all his children shall become truly pious, and saved eternally? Has he, in fact, given an absolute promise concerning any one in particular? True, he has given such general promises as encourage a general expectation; and perhaps this is all.

The same remarks will apply to other cases. It is not uncommon for eminently pious persons to have their minds deeply concerned and exercised for some object of affectionate interest, whose conversion is to them a matter of prayerful solicitude; and has been sought either by praying alone, or in connection with it, by the use of means. In

that case, how far should faith in prayer go? Are we authorised fully to believe that the individual *will* be converted? To this it may be interrogatively replied, Has God any where promised the conversion of *that* person? If so, we may be firmly assured that this blessed result will take place. But since no such promise is granted, all that we can do is to hope for it; and we are in many cases encouraged *strongly* to hope. Hope means the union of desire and expectation, and certainly includes some *degree* of faith; for what we expect, we must in some measure believe. In like manner must all the labours of the faithful minister be carried on, and indeed all attempts for the conversion of others. There must not only be the use of appropriate means, but also earnest prayer to God; and that prayer must be in faith. We are not, I think, warranted fully to believe that any particular effort will certainly be blessed for the conversion of such and such a person; for is it promised? Such particularity of faith is not warranted, for such particularity of promise is not given. General expectation that God will bless the means in some measure, and to such persons as he thinks fit, is warranted; and strong hopes may be often entertained of the special efficacy of the means in particular and selected cases; but if belief is to be ruled by the promise, and no special promise can be found, no special and certain answer to prayer may be looked for with absolute certainty. Surely, here is ample room even with this latitude, for believing prayer. Churches, in praying for their ministers, ought to pray in faith that they will be blessed; and ministers in praying for themselves, ought to do the same, because we have God's promise, "That as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and return not thither again, but water the earth and make it

bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth : it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."—Isaiah lv, 10, 11. This, and many other general promises, warrant a very strong general expectation. And in that general faith, both ministers and people are lamentably deficient;—a remark which applies with equal truth and force to our efforts for the conversion of the world. We must give ourselves far more to prayer for this great event than we have ever yet done, before it will take place. Money alone will never do it, though we had the revenue of the British empire at command. It is greatly to be feared that our dependence is yet far more upon money, than upon prayer. We seem to calculate our success by our means. Our funds are the atmosphere which raise or depress the quicksilver of our hopes : and as God works by means, this, to a certain extent, is natural ; but *we* carry it to excess :—it would seem as if money were every thing, and prayer nothing. We shall never convert the world as we are : the church is not in a state for such an enterprise : it is not strong enough in faith and prayer for such a work. Believing prayer is wanted,—the God-exalting and honouring spirit of wrestling faith. Our churches must be full of prayers, and our prayers full of faith. But then, even here, we have none but general promises, and cannot have any thing but general faith. We know not which mission, or which missionary shall prosper, this or that, or whether all shall be alike.

We have heard a great deal said about the conversion of sinners at home and abroad, which appeared to us not warranted either by reason, revelation, or experience. In

enquiring why no more good has been done, two opposite causes have been assigned by two different classes of respondents. Some have resolved it all into Divine sovereignty, and others all into the neglect of appointed means. Both are wrong, by ascribing it *all to one* cause. There is no question that against the opinion of the one, the deficiency of result, in great part, arises from the deficiency of appropriate means, and not all from the sovereignty of God. It is not that God is wanting to his promise, but that man is wanting in his duty. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the most appropriate means are not always successful. Was there any thing wanting in the personal ministry of Christ? and yet how generally unsuccessful was he? Had not the apostles often to complain of a want of success? and were *they* deficient in the use of proper means? And how is it that precisely the same means are followed with such different results, in the case of different persons? *Something* then must be set down to the sovereignty of God, not in the way of excusing man's neglect, but in the way of accounting for the various measures of success in the use of means. The whole subject resolves itself into the nature of the connexion between moral means and their results, which of course is quite different from that subsisting between physical cause and effect: in the latter case it is fixed and invariable—in the former, it is contingent both upon man's will and God's.

An important and interesting question will here arise,—“Whether a strong impression upon the mind, to ask for a particular blessing which is not specially promised, is a sufficient ground and warrant for faith to expect it with certainty, as an answer to prayer.” Dr. Manton, in his Commentary on James, when writing on the passage we have quoted and explained, remarks, “*Some that have more*

near communion with God may have a particular faith of some particular occurrences. By some special instincts in prayer from the Spirit of God, they have gone away, and said with David, *In this will I be confident.* I do not say it is usual, but sometimes it may be so. We cannot abridge the Spirit of his liberty of revealing himself to his people. But remember, *Privileges do not make rules.* These are acts of *God's prerogative*, not according to his *standing law and rule.* However, this I conceive is common, that in a particular case, we may conceive the more hope, when our hearts have been drawing out to God by an *actual trust*: that is when we have urged a particular promise to God in prayer, with submission yet with hope: for God seldom faileth a trusting soul. They may lay hold on God by virtue of a double claim, partly by virtue of the single promise that first invited them to God, and then by virtue of another promise made to their *trust*, as 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, who putteth his trust in thee: because he trusteth in thee.'—Isaiah xxvi, 3." This is cautiously worded: and much caution is necessary. To say that God never so layeth a subject upon the heart of his people, and so stirreth up their desires and prayers after it, as to be an intimation of his mind to grant it, of his will that they should certainly expect it, would perhaps be saying more than we have authority for doing. But when we consider how liable such a supposed intimation of the Divine will is to be abused, and how much it has been abused, in giving rise to the wildest, most extravagant and mischievous enthusiasm, mysticism, and fanaticism, we should be very cautious how we admitted, even in the most general and occasional form, the principle that impressions of our mind are a special revelation from God, and intended to be a rule of conduct, or a ground of ex-

pectation. The safest rule of action and expectation is to abide close by God's written Word, and where we have only general promises, to be satisfied with a general faith : to ask for such things only as God has promised to give : in regard to spiritual blessings, to look for the very blessings themselves : and in regard to temporal ones, to qualify and regulate every petition with a profound submission to the will of God, believing that he hears every prayer we present, and will answer it at such time, and in such manner, as shall be most for his glory and our good.

It may be both instructive and encouraging to exhibit a few examples out of many that may be selected from the Word of God, of faith in prayer. And where shall we begin, but with him, who is our great Exemplar, and who in this, as well as in other things, hath left us an example that we should follow his steps. Our Lord Jesus Christ is said to be "the author and finisher of faith." In his human nature, he was both a man of faith, and a man of prayer, and was the highest of all instances of believing prayer. "Ask of me," said the Eternal Father to the Son, in the covenant transactions of redeeming mercy, "and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." He did ask, and in all the full assurance of faith. What promises were made to Him in his covenant relations and work as Mediator. How beautiful the language of the ancient prophets.—Isaiah xlix, 1-12.—liii, 10-12. Do we desire a specimen of His prayer, we may find one, and it is but a specimen, but how glorious an one, in John xvii. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." That wondrous prayer is full of faith, and this is one of the uses we should make of it,

to see how Jesus prayed, and how he believed. And as to his confidence in God, his whole life was full of it, as it was also of the most sublime devotion. Let his followers learn of him in this respect, as well as in others.

But, perhaps, examples less august and lofty will also instruct us. Turn then, first of all, to the prayer of Moses for Israel, when, for the sins of the people in worshipping the gods of Egypt, in the wilderness, God said to him, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." What an appeal to his ambition, if he had any, to become the head and stock of a new great nation! Yet it had no charm for him, when, as he thought, the glory of his God was involved, and likely to be obscured, and he "besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever."—Exodus xxxii, 11-13. O, the boldness—the holy familiarity—the disinterestedness—the pure zeal for God's glory, contained in this wondrous prayer—and then the faith! How he took his stand upon the covenant; and held up the promise; and laid hold of the uplifted arm of God; and by his faith, threw round it the silken cord, and golden chain, and held it fast in these

so that it could not fall in consuming anger upon the people !

And Daniel also, that man of deep devotion, how when he knew by the records of prophecy the seventy years of the captivity were expiring, he set his face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, for the restoration of Jerusalem, and the deliverance of the people. His belief in the certainty of the event, instead of releasing him from prayer, set him upon it, and he thus pleaded in faith. And previously to this, when that cruel plot was formed against his life, see him when he "knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house ; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."—Daniel vi, 10. There, was the prayer of faith, in one of its most beautiful instances. He prayed for grace to be faithful in that hour of trial, and he confided in his God, either to deliver him out of the mouths of the lions, or to sustain him to endure a martyrdom so dreadful. And what a reward !

The page of the New Testament is adorned with instances of this confidence in prayer. Behold the Syrophenician woman appealing to Incarnate Mercy for her possessed daughter, beseeching for a cure from him who only could effect it, and whom she believed could, if he would. What a plea ! "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Such an appeal of course will be instantly heard and granted. No. "He answered her not a word." What, the ear of pity deaf to such a petition ! "What," one should have imagined she would say, "is this the mercy, the fame of which has reached even my afflicted home ? Will he not hear me, look on me, answer me ; must I

return, and tell all who come to inquire about my success, he would not bestow a word or even a look upon me?" To increase her distress and discouragement, the disciples came to Christ and besought him, saying, "Send her away, for she troubleth us." Is this all the mercy that could be found in the hearts of all the twelve apostles? Poor woman, we pity you. There is very little hope for you. Jesus at length breaks silence, and says, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." His words are more distressing than his silence; *that* might have arisen from his not hearing them, or from his meditating what answer to return to them: but these seem to put her beyond the pale of hope. Still her faith holds on, and her prayer continues, for "She came and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me." To this he makes a reply that *seems* to add insult to neglect. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." Mysterious answer! O Saviour, how apparently unlike thyself! What must have been the poor widow's reflections. "My heart is now almost broken—am I not a woman? and must I be called a dog? Is it thus he will belie his own character, and break the bruised reed? Must I go home and look upon my poor child with the sting of this insult and its venom rankling in my tortured bosom?" Surely she will now give up her suit—stop her plea—and abjure her faith. Yes, she would have done so had her faith been less strong. "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Marvellous reply, one of the finest turns which language ever formed, and the most ingenious deductions ever drawn. Jesus could hold out no longer. He could protract the trial no farther. Like Joseph under the influence of his feelings when his heart was moved by the discourse of his brothers, he drops the innocent disguise which his bursting compassion could sustain not

another moment, and with delighted surprise he exclaims, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."—Matt. xv, 22-28. What was the meaning of all this? What was the secret of Christ's seemingly inexplicable conduct? What? He saw he had a subject which would enable him to exhibit to the world an extraordinary instance of faith in prayer, and he determined to draw it forth in all its power and beauty. His heart was moved towards her from the beginning. He knew what he would do: and though he beat her off with one hand, he held her fast by the other.

Here then we have an instance of prayer continued under delays, apparent neglect, and repulse, and continued through the power of faith. The woman still believed that there was mercy in that heart to which she for a long time appealed in vain, and that she should ultimately succeed—and she did.

Then is our belief in God's faithfulness most tried and most triumphant when we still maintain it amidst those hopes delayed which make the heart sick. God often sees fit to postpone for a season his compliance with our requests. Though his ears are always open to our cries, he carries it sometimes in such a manner as if they were fast closed against them; or as if he had covered his throne with a cloud, through which our prayer could not pierce. A minister praying for the success of his labours may be heard in mercy, though it do not happen so soon, or though he cannot see it so clearly as he may naturally desire. A parent may pray for the salvation of his children, and his desires may have gone up with acceptance before the throne, although the accomplishment may be yet far distant, and they seem for the time to increase unto more ungodliness. An afflicted person may have actually obtained the sanctified improvement of his tribulation,

although he cannot yet perceive the ends of Divine Providence in it; the happy discovery of which may be a feast reserved, a cordial in store, for him at some future season. In general a mercy may be granted with advantage and increase, though it be suspended for a time. The fruits of God's love must hang to ripen in the warm beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and to be filled out with the rain and dews of heaven, which the hand of his unwise and clamorous children would sometimes pluck in a state of immaturity. In this interval, however, the Christian's eyes will be ready to fail with looking long; and he may be in danger of losing his faith and stopping his prayers. Therefore our Lord spoke a parable on purpose to teach men always to pray and not to faint.—Luke xviii, 1.

Another lesson taught us by the faith, perseverance, and success of the Syrophenician woman is, to continue believing prayer under the frowning and discouraging aspect of providential occurrences. The Christian may be sure he is warranted to carry a matter to God in prayer; he may have every reason to believe it is in entire accordance with the will of God; he may have all possible grounds to expect an answer to his prayer; yet all this while there may be a strange and perplexing aspect of God's providence. Events may conspire to discourage him. Not only does God delay to answer, but he seems to give out nothing but rebuffs. Sometimes like Job, he is compelled to say, "He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass; and he hath set darkness in my paths."—Chap. xix, 8. At other times he echoes the plaint of Jacob, "All these things are against me." He seems farther and farther from obtaining his object: and if he hearkened to reason, or judged by sense, he would abandon the suit. But no, "I am right," he says: "I have God's clear promise. I will hold on by faith, and not

cease to pray. He is a God that hideth himself. Clouds and darkness are round about him; but within those clouds, and wrapt in that darkness, is the object I am seeking; and by and by it will come out of the cloud in all its brightness in answer to believing prayer. I will take hold of his covenant and wait his time."

How much reproof does this subject administer to all God's children, for their neglect of prayer itself—that blessed privilege, which gives such honour to God, and brings such comfort to man. Especially does it reprove us for the weakness of our faith in prayer. How many pray as if they never expected their prayers to be answered. Prayer is little else to them than a duty to be performed, and when it is ended it is done with. They act in prayer, pretty much like those men who carry about bills, knocking at every door and leaving them under the knocker, but never expecting an answer and never waiting for one. They knock and go on. But is *this* prayer? Nothing like it. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me," said the prophet.—Habakkuk ii, 1. He had sent up his prayer, and he was now observing and waiting to see what would come of it; whether the blessing would come, and whence it would come. It is our shame to think so little of prayer—to have such low, dark, desponding thoughts concerning it. And why? Because our faith itself is weak. Therefore let us pray, "Lord increase our faith." It is but a little while longer we shall have need of either faith or prayer. These are the exercises, the invariable exercises of grace; the ebullitions of that well of water which has been opened in the soul by the gift of Christ in the Holy Spirit, and which is ever springing up to everlasting life.

CHAPTER VIII.

FAITH IN HEARING THE WORD.

It has been said in reference to legislation, that there are many good laws, but that there wanteth one more good law to secure obedience to all the rest. So may it be said of hearing sermons—many good ones are delivered, but there yet needs another to put in practice all the rest. This is the design of the present chapter. And there is a single word, which if attended to, will accomplish this. “The word preached,” said the apostle, in reference to the Israelites, “did not profit them, not being mixed with FAITH in them that heard it.”—Heb. iv. 2. This lets us into the entire secret of profitable sermons on the one hand, and useless ones on the other—believing or not believing makes all the difference. The Israelites had the gospel, or as the word signifies, *the glad tidings* of Canaan declared to them in the wilderness; even as we have the glad tidings of the heavenly rest; but they did not believe them, and the promise did nothing for them but aggravate their guilt and condemnation. It is faith alone that can make the promise to us of any avail: so said the apostle in another place, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”—1 Thess. ii, 13. If there be no believing, there can be no effectual working, and where

there *is* believing, there will be working. So that if there be no working we know the cause.

Throughout every department of his operations God worketh by instruments or second causes. In the sphere of grace he worketh by the two instruments of *reading* and *preaching* his Word; or by this one instrument applied in a dual manner: and both these are rendered effectual in the same way—by faith—which comes in many cases by reading, but in far more by hearing. In no age of the church does it appear that one of these instruments superseded the other. Neither is to be dispensed with; they assist each other: with more attentive hearing, we should have better reading, and with more diligent reading, better hearing. If you have hearing without reading, you lay the church open to all the corruptions of Popery; you have priests, but no Bibles. If you have reading without hearing, you lay the church open to enthusiasm and fanaticism; you have Bibles, but not the ministry which the Lord hath appointed.

Whoever reflects upon the matter will perceive that it was the same benevolent wisdom in which the entire scheme of our salvation originated, that made preaching the chief means of converting and sanctifying men. Let education advance as it may, the pulpit, however aided by the press, will still remain the chief prop of religion in our world. And yet even this, with all its power derived from its Divine appointment and admirable adaptation to our mental economy, is not so efficient as might be looked for. When we consider what the gospel is, the glad tidings and offer of eternal life to the perishing children of men—the adaptation of the living voice to instruct and impress—the Divine command to proclaim these glad tidings—the millions of sermons which are continually being preached—

and the occasional exhibitions of its power, such as the conversions on the day of Pentecost, and under the preaching of Whitfield and Wesley—we are astonished that a greater result does not habitually follow the use of such an instrumentality. What countless millions of sermons seem to be preached in vain, so far as regards any appreciable, or at any rate, ascertained result. Let an individual Christian, especially one far advanced in life, sum up if he can, the thousands of discourses he has heard on all the various topics of Divine truth, and then inquire what he ought to have been as to knowledge, faith, holiness, deadness to the world, and meetness for heaven and eternity. What a sad, and melancholy, and humbling disproportion as to the means and the products, will he discover in himself. Where in his case, or where in the case of others, is the *profiting* by all this? No doubt there has been much mental gratification; much imaginative and even religious pleasure, in hearing all these discourses; and no small degree of edification. It may also be lawful to take into account what, but for these sermons, he might have been in the way of spiritual deterioration. Still we say, what a small amount of profiting in the way of increased acquaintance with his Bible, and increased christian holiness in all its visible branches, can he persuade himself he has gained. Let it never be forgotten that real, actual profiting—the enstamping of the Bible deeply upon the heart and visibly upon character—the transformation of the whole heart and soul into the image of God and the mind of Christ—the cultivation of a heavenly temper, and a meetness for glory everlasting—with real Christian consolation during our pilgrimage to the skies—are the ends of preaching; and that provided these are not promoted, whatever there may otherwise be of the gratification of

taste, or the excitement of pleasurable emotion—the end of preaching is not gained. This, and this only, is *profiting*. Multitudes are pleased, who are not in the smallest degree profited: and sometimes they are *least* profited who are most pleased: while on the other hand, many a hearer little disposed at the time to be gratified by what he heard, has, like the patient who suffered almost with anger the sharp pangs inflicted by the surgeon's knife or probe, lived to bless the man who put him to pain, instead of merely lulling pain with opiates. If this be true, that *profiting* is the end of preaching, how much of failure is perpetually going on in accomplishing the ends of preaching. How is this? To whom shall we impute the blame?

Partly this is to be ascribed to the *preachers* of the gospel. Either their aim is often something else than profiting their hearers, or else they know not how to accomplish *this*. One should suppose it impossible to hear a great deal of even what is called the evangelical preaching of this age, without asking the question, "Who can be profited by *this*? What adaptation is there in all this to convert sinners,—to instruct, sanctify, and comfort believers? It is all very fine: there is much to please the intellect, to gratify the taste, to exercise the imagination; but what bearing is there in it upon spiritual edification, in any view of it?" I do not forget that many persons and preachers also, take a far too limited view of the range of pulpit instruction, and would exclude from sermons subjects which I think might and should be introduced to them. And I am equally convinced that *instruction* is by many thought too little of as one way of *profiting*. A discourse replete with clear scriptural exposition, but which was addressed principally to the understanding, would be thought cold, uninteresting, and un-

profitable, if it did not contain what would be called *experience*, and was not made up in great part of fervid appeals to the feelings. By such persons, *profiting* means nothing more than emotional excitement.

Still it is my sad and serious belief that if the evangelical pulpit is losing its power, it is just because it is losing sight of its object and its aim. The cultivation of the intellect and the advancement of knowledge, in the present day, are lifting both preachers and hearers above the plain and simple gospel of Christ. Sermons are with many persons no longer heard as the word of God, but as the word of man ; not as means of grace and aids to salvation, but as intellectual exercises on religious topics, for the gratification of taste, intellect, and imagination on a Sunday. And it must be confessed that the preachers of them are, by their artificial and excessive elaboration, and the introduction of new topics, teaching their hearers so to regard them, and are training them thus to be a kind of amateur hearers of sermons. A philosophized Christianity instead of a christianized philosophy, is finding its way into our pulpits ; which, aided by a rationalistic taste, and set off by an aspiring intellectuality, is seducing the church from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. And to what shall we attribute all this, but to the increasing weakness of faith ? The faith of many a preacher is fluttering at this moment in the spell of the basilisk eye which is fixed upon it : or if it be not so far under the spell, is whirling in dangerous circles and partial admiration round it. The faith of the pulpit is become somewhat enervated. You do not always see the preacher rising clothed in all the awful majesty of eternal truth ; nor hear him wielding "the powers of the world to come," as if his eye at that moment were piercing the veil and gazing upon the Shekinah on the mercy seat ;

nor feel him commending himself to your conscience as in the sight of God. His is not the power to encircle your imagination with the realities of the unseen world; to unveil to you the glories of heaven, the terrors of hell; and to make you feel as if the day of judgment had come, and you stood face to face before the Judge on the great white throne. No: it is often power; but of another kind, and for another end. It is the power of intellectuality, of taste, of logic, of poetry, of philosophy—the power to *please*, but not to profit. You say, as you witness the exhibitions of intellect, “Here is the *reason*, but where is the *faith* of the preacher?”

But this chapter has chiefly to do with the faith of the *hearer*, or rather the want of it. Without faith it is impossible to hear even the gospel itself with profit. No matter how grand, glorious, and to ourselves interesting and important the theme—no matter how certain—no matter what may be the consequences of receiving or rejecting it—no matter how anxiously or how pressingly it may be urged upon us—it *can* do us no good if it be not believed. It may be to us, as it is, a message of life and salvation, but till faith opens the door of the mind and heart to let it into the soul, it is a blessing at the gate but not in the house.

Our object therefore now will be to inquire in what way faith is to be so exercised in relation to the preaching of the Word of God as to secure a profitable hearing.

FIRST, we shall consider the exercise of belief *before* hearing sermons.

It need scarcely be said that the whole course of our hearing to be profitable must rest upon the basis of an *habitual* faith in the Scriptures as the Word of God, and in Christ as the substance of Divine revelation. No man

can attend the ministry of the Word in faith, who is not a believer of the Word itself. And this thought must be habitually in our mind in prospect of going to the house of God. Suppose you were going to court, to be honoured with an audience by her Majesty, and to receive a communication or direction from her; and suppose, instead of expecting it to be delivered to you by her own lips, you knew she would speak by one of her ministers, who would also be empowered to expound as well as to read it. Still, the prevailing thought of your mind, in prospect of going into the royal presence would be, "I am going to receive a message from the Queen. I must be profoundly attentive to all I hear, that I may understand every word of the royal mandate, and be prepared to execute the monarch's will." You would not consider the intervention of a third person, so far, as to put aside this view of your visit to court. You would not allow your expectations to settle on the reader of the Queen's address to you; it would not be the eloquence of his exposition of it, the melody of his voice, the fascination of his manner, that would fill and occupy beforehand your mind. No; it would be the presence and commands of majesty, and the right manner of conducting yourself as regards the royal message. What else or what less is before you in going to hear a sermon? It is a message from God to you. It is God speaking by his ministers. And shall your mind be occupied wholly by the one thought, as it too frequently is, of your being about to hear some popular preacher or even your own? Faith lifts the soul above this low expectation, and fills it with the solemn thought, "I am going to hear what God the Lord will say unto me." In proportion as we realize this, we shall collect our thoughts; and elevate our ideas; and compose our minds; just as we should properly dress,

adjust, and adorn our persons, and prepare our manner, for our appearance at court.

And then faith will consider preaching not as a human, but a divine institute. We shall not only recognize in it a wisely adapted but humanly invented means of improvement, but an ordinance of God, which derives its efficacy in part from his own appointment. We shall consider it as the way in which he holds his walks, and is wont to reveal himself to his people. "Thou meetest him that worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways." Hence it will enlarge our expectations in prospect of going up to the house of God. We shall look for him there, and cherish an assurance that we are going to be blessed by the word which he will speak to us. Without a particle of enthusiasm, we *shall*, for we *may* suppose, that the preacher will say something that will suit our case. Our anticipations will rise to something higher than even "the feast of reason and the flow of soul." To the heart hungering and thirsting after righteousness, something else will attract it to the pulpit, than mere intellectuality, logic, or rhetoric—even the provisions of God's house—the truths of the gospel—the bread of life. The expectations thus raised and supported by faith, God will not disappoint: but will bless the provisions of his house, and satisfy the poor with bread. He will reveal himself, in and by the sermon, to those who come to see his power and glory in the sanctuary. He loves to realise those expectations which centre in himself, instead of the preacher; and to satisfy those longings which are directed to the enjoyment of his favour. How different all this to the practice of those who go to worship merely to see and be seen; or because their fathers went and they have been taught to go; or to criticise or worship the preacher; or to furnish their heads with know-

ledge, instead of enriching their hearts with grace; or to calm and appease their conscience; or to save themselves from being called atheists; or to make hearing sermons their religion itself, instead of regarding them as only the means of learning and promoting it; of course there is no faith in any of these.

Faith would unquestionably lead us, did we possess it, to pray very earnestly for the spirit of God to be granted both to ourselves and the preacher. "For who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every man?" There is no blessing upon the Word but what comes from God. Not a sermon will ever convert a sinner, or comfort or sanctify a believer, without God's Spirit. The Word indeed is, in its own nature, quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword; but it is only in the hand of the Spirit that it does any execution, and pierces through the inmost recesses of the heart. The seed of the kingdom contains a germinating and vegetating principle; but it is only as it is fertilised by the moisture that comes from the clouds that it will grow. The believer recognises this truth, and goes to his closet with the prayer, "Lord, if thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." We should in this respect as in others, turn God's promises into prayers, and say, "Bless both the preacher and my soul. Open thou mine eyes by his ministry, to see wondrous things out of thy law: and as thou hast said thou wilt abundantly bless the provisions of thy house, fulfil this day thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused him to hope." Prayerless hearers must be profitless hearers. When we see the careless, undevout manner in which people hurry off to sermons, can we wonder that they get no good by them? It would be a wonder if they did. Not

a pause in their worldly thoughts—not a single ejaculatory prayer on the way to God's house, or entering into it—not the glance of an eye or a thought to heaven, either of desire or expectation. Alas, alas, what good can come of hearing sermons in this fashion?

Secondly. Faith must be in exercise *in* hearing sermons, not only before but at the time. It must be *mixed* with hearing. Hearing and believing must be contemporaneous. As the truths of the discourse enter the ear, faith must, as we have said, open the door to give them cordial welcome. It will lead you to listen to a sermon with solemn attention, deep reverence, devout affections, as, to the WORD OF GOD. As the truth is unfolded by the preacher, you should rise above him to the God who sends him;—yea, you should rise above the truth he speaks to the God who is its author. The gospel itself is infinitely momentous, for it is the word of salvation. On the effects which it produces in us, depends our state for eternity. It is the word of *life*—the very element in which the Christian is appointed to live and to receive continual accessions of light and purity, until he is presented faultless in the presence of the Divine Glory. But it is still more solemn to recollect it is the Word of GOD; and which is never heard in an appropriate frame, except when the hearer is saying in sincerity and truth, "*Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.*"

If there be faith in hearing, *all disposition to carp, cavil, and criticise, will be dismissed* from the soul, and be considered as much out of place as they would be in a sick man who was listening to directions for the saving of his life, or a condemned man who was receiving instructions how he might avoid an ignominious death. We should hear the Word of God less in the character of judges than

of those who shall be judged by it. A true belief will not indeed receive error for truth, and feed and flourish as well upon poison as upon bread. It can and will discriminate between the doctrines of men and the revelations of God: and it is no less its duty to reject what is false than to receive what is true. But with this discrimination, the believer will unite candour, docility, and meekness. The soul awed by the presence of God—the importance of salvation—the solemnities of judgment—the prospect of eternity—and the scenes of heaven and hell—which it is the business of the preacher to bring before it, will have no time and no disposition to dwell on little imperfections of the composition, manner, and elocution of the speaker, or to condemn a sermon useful as a whole, for a word, a phrase, or a sentiment, not exactly to the taste of the hearer.

Self-application is eminently characteristic of true faith. The believer hears not so much for others as for himself. *He* does not rightly believe the gospel who does not believe that Christ died for *him* as well as others; so neither does any man rightly hear the gospel, who does not hear for himself. “What should we think,” says Robert Hall, “of a person who, after accepting an invitation to a feast, and taking his place at the table, instead of partaking of the repast, amused himself with speculating on the nature of the provisions, or the manner in which they were prepared, and their adaptation to the temperament of the several guests, without partaking of a single article. Such however, is the conduct of those who hear the Word without applying it to themselves, or considering the aspect it bears on their individual character.” Faith detaches every one from the congregation, places him in a state of isolation, and amidst surrounding multitudes makes him hear apart.

In the exercise of this grace, the believer says, "God speaks to *me* by the preacher: that doctrine is *my* lesson, and I must learn it: that command is *my* duty, I must practise it: that promise is *my* encouragement, I must live upon it: that warning is for *my* admonition, I must give heed to it." It lays up every thing in our hearts, either for present or future use.

But it becomes us above all to apply those truths and portions to our case which are *specially appropriate*; and often-times these are so unmistakeable, that we are ready to imagine either that some one had made the preacher acquainted with our case, or that God had given a special direction to his thoughts with a view to us. In order to this however, we must become intimately acquainted with our own sins, weaknesses, wants, temptations, and dangers. No one can be a profitable hearer who has not much self-knowledge. That which is food for one is poison for another. Believers lose their comfort and unbelievers their souls, because one applies the threatenings to themselves and the other the promises. In hearing, therefore, while the ear is given to the preacher, the eye should be fixed intently upon the heart, to give a right direction to all that is said.

Faith has not only to do with *new truths* or even *new discoveries* of received ones, but with *old ones* also. It is its business not only to make excursions into unexplored countries, but to traverse those already known: not merely to find out new walks and prospects, but to take new pleasure in frequented paths, and to be ever seeing new beauties in these. We appeal to the experience of every real Christian, whether the sweetest and most profitable seasons he has enjoyed have not been those in which he is not conscious of having learned any new truth strictly

speaking, but in which he was indulged with spiritual and transforming views of the plain, unquestionable discoveries of the gospel. As the Word of God is the food for souls, so it corresponds to that character in this respect, among others—that the strength and refreshment it imparts depend not upon its novelty, but upon the nutritious properties it possesses. It is a sickly appetite only which craves incessant variety.

Impartiality is essentially included in the faith of hearing. There is a vast variety of subjects in the Word of God. It is a garden of many flowers, all beautiful in their season,—a feast of many dishes, all pleasant and nutritious ; and though one flower may be more admired than another, and one viand more relished than another, yet all will be regarded with approbation and delight. Yet how many there are who have their favourite topics, and can endure no other. Some are all for doctrinal statements, and esteem as cold legality all preceptive preaching ; while others are all for duty, and revile as antinomianism the exhibition of the doctrines of grace. Some would have only the mild persuasion of the gospel, while others would have the preacher clothe himself in the terrors of Sinai, and deal in thunder. Some would have the privileges of true believers only dwelt upon, and others want the sins of worldly professors constantly denounced. This is fancy, not faith. *The wisdom that cometh from above is without partiality and without hypocrisy.* As it is a symptom of a diseased state of body to be able to relish only one sort of food, it is not less so of the mind to have a taste for only one sort of instruction. Faith, like the bee, sucks honey from every flower, whatever be its form, its colour, or its fragrance.

Thirdly. Faith has something to do *after* hearing.

It perpetuates the remembrance of what we have heard. We cannot be saved by a forgotten word. And we know and believe the truth in vain if we do not remember it. This we are taught by those awful expressions, "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."—1 Cor. xv, 2. The apostle James aptly describes, by a most appropriate figure, the faint and transient impressions produced by sermons on those that hear them, when he compares them to the hasty glances which a person takes of his form, when he passes rapidly before a mirror: "If any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."—Chap. i, 23-24. He does not stay long enough before the mirror to see what in his person needs to be removed, or in his dress to be adjusted; and therefore soon forgets what he was in appearance, and what he needs to do with himself for a *becoming* appearance. So is it with the hearer of the Word, without a true belief of it. He catches from the sermon a hasty and imperfect view of his moral self, but he pays no particular attention to his character, conduct, and requirements, passes from before the moral mirror, and forgets all he heard. Under sermons he is perhaps impressed and convinced; but there is no faith, and the impression is soon effaced. It was emotion, not conviction, that was produced,—mere sensibility, not believing choice. Now nothing will keep up the recollection and perpetuate the conviction, but a firm belief of its truth. "Yes," says the man who believes, "it is all true: the solemnities of public worship are over—the voice of the preacher is hushed—the tones and words of impassioned eloquence

are gone ; but the awful truth remains : sin and salvation are what they were, and all they were, when so vividly described from the pulpit. I believe it : Lord help my unbelief." Such a man *looketh* into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein. He stands long before the mirror of the sermon ; attentively considers his character and conduct as reflected from it ; sees what needs to be altered, supplied or improved. He carries away an accurate knowledge and vivid recollection of what he heard. "He being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

Faith *expostulates with our hearts on what we have heard*. It preaches the sermon all over again to the individual alone. Ah ! here is the reason why sermons are preached in vain. As soon as the service is over, instead of breaking up in solemn silence and retiring, each one too full, too serious, to engage in idle talk, many by common consent begin to converse with each other about the most trivial matters in the house of God, and all the way home ; and then, instead of retiring to their closets to pray over in secret what they have heard in the sanctuary, they all gather round the fireside in gleeful mood to enjoy themselves, now the sermon is over. Not so all. Here and there a devout and spiritual mind, full of the subject, steals away to her chamber to muse upon, and pray over, and apply it all. "No," she says, "I cannot forget such truths ; they *are* truths, and I believe them. I have seen and felt them afresh to-day. My conviction of them is strengthened. O God, I thank thee that thy servant was enabled to bring them before me with such light and power. Let them abide in me continually, and influence me in every thing."

Faith *disposes those who have it, to converse with others about what they have heard*. When we have been informed

of some great and important news, which concerns others as well as ourselves, we are naturally inclined to talk of it with those who have a joint interest in it. This conversation between Christians about the sermon, however, will refer far more to the theme of the discourse, than to the ability of the preacher. Strong impression perhaps in some cases, will dispose to musing rather than to speaking, even as deep rivers flow in silence. The heart, in others, will be too full to repress its emotions. But in either case it will be lifted far above the region of criticism, mere admiration, or taste. The tongue if it speak will echo the awful truths the ear has heard. "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" So said the two disciples who had conversed with the Saviour on the way to Emmaus: and so say the profited, as well as pleased hearers of a sermon to one another, when it is over. Listen to the discourse of two different groups of hearers on their way home, or after they have reached it. "What an eloquent sermon!" exclaims one person: "And what a beautiful voice!" replies the other: "And how graceful his action!" adds a third. "What genius, what imagery, what splendid diction! What an intellectual treat. He is unquestionably the greatest preacher of the day. Such new ideas—such a *philosophical* view of his subject." There is not much faith in all this. These hearers would have said it all after hearing a public lecture, and have had just as much piety too. But now listen to the remarks of another circle. "Well," says a serious and thoughtful individual, "if we are not profited by such clear and full exhibitions of momentous truth—such solemn admonitions—and such faithful warnings—the fault will be our own." "Yes," replies another, "we must be more in earnest in the pursuit of salvation; the

great themes of revelation never stood out before me in such transparent reality, nor came upon my heart with such power before." "Nor," says a third, "was I ever so deeply convinced either of the evil of sin, or the necessity of an atonement, or of the glory of the gospel to meet the case of the condemned sinner." "I have thought till now," adds a fourth, "that I fully felt the value of a Saviour, but the brightness of his glory has come over me to-day with new splendour." This is faith, not fancy—piety, not mere taste. Better, far better, not speak at all, but go home in silence, than to enter upon all kinds of general and trifling conversation as soon as the service is over. Men soon talk away the good impressions they have received. Convictions are thus stifled in the birth, and good resolutions fall into oblivion. In the olden time it was customary for the saintly father, at the hour of evening prayer, to recapitulate the sermons which the family had all heard, or to call upon them for some account of these discourses. Alas, how has this, and some other exercises of domestic piety, fallen into desuetude in our days! Why do not the heads of families still act thus with their households? How it would benefit themselves by riveting what they had heard upon their own memories, and how it would benefit their servants and children, to go over at home in a familiar manner, the sermon which they had heard in the sanctuary. Parents, how this would tend to impress them with your own convictions of the truth of what you had heard. Alas, alas, how rarely do some families receive from their parents any remarks upon the sermons they have heard, but in the way of cavil, criticism, or censoriousness! Who can wonder that such children look with contempt upon the preaching thus held up to ridicule, and prefer a novel or a play to sermons they have been thus led to despise.

Faith will *immediately* and *anxiously* reduce to practice what it has heard. Nothing in Scripture is purely speculative. There is no mere science in religion. All revelation, not excepting the sublimest mysteries, is practical, and furnishes motives to the practice of some duty, or the exercise of some grace. The *doctrine* of faith is designed to produce the *obedience* of faith. If this be true of the Word of God itself, it is equally true of hearing it. If it be not *true*, hearing is too much; if it *be* true, hearing is too little. It is published not only that it might be *heard*, but *done*; and it is only a solemn mockery of God—an awful impertinence—an aggravated insult, to hear sermons with apparent seriousness, without even an intention to comply with their directions. Will hearing sermons without practising them carry you to heaven? No, any more than hearing a lecture upon medicine will cure your disease; or upon the elements of food satisfy your hunger. Here then is the action of faith—it goes straight from hearing the sermon to reduce it to practice. The sermon reveals to us our corruption—*this* instantly sets about mortifying them. The sermon makes known a neglected duty—*this* goes and performs it. The sermon calls for a sacrifice of something dear to us—*this* instantly makes the surrender. We have all just as much belief *during* and *in* the sermon, as we have of obedience to its requirements afterwards, and no more.

It is the part of faith, *if we have received any benefit, to ascribe it all to God's grace*. It is neither to yourself, nor to the instrument, that the honour of a successful and profitable attendance is to be ascribed. There was indeed your own attention, and the minister's instruction, and they were necessary to your benefit; but it was by God's grace that both were made effectual. Set the crown on the head of your Divine Lord, and not on that of the

minister. Preachers are neither to be under nor over-valued. Honour them—love them—pray for them—be grateful to them; but do not idolize them.

Such is the course you *should* follow if you would profit by the means of grace, and *will* follow if you hear with faith. O Christian, consider how much of the power and happiness of the divine life in your soul depends upon the hearing of sermons. Unhappily, multitudes allow themselves to be too dependent on these means, to the neglect of the private perusal of the Scriptures. It were much to be wished you would be more conversant with the Bible; that you would make this the man of your daily counsel; and secure leisure for studying the Word of God for yourself. That you would dig for treasure yourself in that unexhausted, inexhaustible mine of wealth: but as some have not time, and others but little ability, and all too little inclination, it is of immense importance you should know how to improve by the sermons which you have opportunity and disposition to hear, and therefore you should take all suitable opportunities for hearing them.

A few words may be subjoined on the subject of the exercise of faith as regards THE LORD'S SUPPER. In the observance of this solemn and impressive ordinance, there is ample room for the exercise of all the great principles of true religion. No institute of the gospel has been more misunderstood or more abused than this. It is of infinite consequence that it should be cleared from all the mistakes by which ignorance and superstition have beclouded and corrupted it. We remark then that the person by whom it is observed should be a genuine believer in our Lord Jesus Christ. Unless this be the case, it cannot be done in faith at all. None but a true believer can enter into its design. All else must "eat and drink judgment to

themselves, not discerning the Lord's body." It is not a *converting* ordinance, but a strengthening and edifying one. It is poison, not food, to an unconverted man. The celebration of it in an unregenerated state ministers to delusion, and wraps the soul up in perpetual unbelief. There can be no *exercise* of faith in this ordinance if there be not a *principle* of genuine belief already in the soul. Let none therefore be urged to observe the Lord's Supper, who have not first committed their souls into the Lord's hands, to be redeemed by his blood, and regenerated by his Spirit.

And then not only must the person partaking of the Lord's Supper be a true believer, but his observance of the Supper must be an act of his belief. It must itself be an exercise of faith. It must not be a mere formality and bodily ceremony; but while the senses are conversant with the material elements, the mind must be taken up with the authority, nature, and design of the institute.

It should be observed with an intelligent and deep conviction of its Divine appointment and obligation, "I must needs keep this feast," says the Christian, "because Christ has enjoined it. He, and not man, instituted it. There is nothing of human device in it. I yield to his authority who said, 'Do this in remembrance of me.'" The rite has come down associated with the practice of the church of God in every age—apostles, martyrs, and reformers have observed it: but it is not on that ground that I continue the custom, but because I have faith in Christ, and not because I yield to ecclesiastical authority. He had a *right* to set up this ordinance—he *did* set it up—and I submit to his authority, and obey his commands."

The believer recognises its purely symbolical and commemorative nature. He does not sink into the revolting absurdity and degrading superstition of Romish or semi-Romish notions on this subject. It is true the Papist

boasts of his greater faith in embracing the profound mystery of transubstantiation. He tells us he exceeds all men in faith, for he believes not only what is above reason, but against it. He discredits the testimony of the very senses, and believes that that which has the taste, and smell, and other accidents of bread, is still not bread in its substance. He boasts of the greatness and strength of his faith. This however is neither faith nor reason, but an abject credulity, a miserable delusion, an absolute renunciation of the human faculties, which, by pretending to cleave close to the literal import of our Lord's words, perverts their meaning, and makes them preposterously absurd. The intelligent Christian knows that the bread is still bread, the wine still wine, and nothing more; and that they are to be used as symbols of truth, the truth of the body and blood of Christ given for his salvation. He rejects the Lutheran notion of *consubstantiation*, which means the presence of the real body and blood of Christ with the bread and wine, as well as the Popish figment of *transubstantiation*. Nor does he entertain any notion of what is called "the mystical presence" of Christ with the elements. He does believe, and it is his glory and felicity to believe, that Christ's presence is *with him* in the act of receiving the bread and wine; but he has no notion, and therefore no belief, of that presence in the elements. Whatever is in the bread and wine, he really and carnally eats and drinks, and the idea of eating and drinking the presence of Christ, is to him very revolting. Besides, of what use would it be to him in a spiritual sense? What is eaten and drank goes into the stomach, and by the process of digestion and assimilation into the body, not into the soul.

It is not then the bread and the wine which are the objects of faith,—these are objects of sense; nor is it these that do good to the soul of themselves, but the truths they

represent. It is only *truth* that can sanctify; and the elements of the Lord's Supper are no farther beneficial to the recipients of them, than as they are regarded in the light of symbols of *truth*. There is neither mystery nor obscurity in the Lord's Supper. It is the simplest thing imaginable; and its simplicity is its glory. It is an emblematic representation and commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ's human nature upon the cross for sin. It is an auxiliary to our faith through the medium of our senses: it is a stirring up of our memories to remember Jesus Christ. "*Do this in remembrance of me.*" This is what it means and all it means, so far as Christ is concerned. Men that love the marvellous and mysterious—that desire to make it an instrument of priestly power—that are prone to imagination and superstition, have laboured hard to make it something more, and in the attempt have destroyed its beautiful simplicity, as a representative and commemorating ordinance. Hence they have exhibited it as the mysteries of our holy religion; the channel of sacramental grace; the unbloody sacrifice of the mass; and have so wrapt it in obscurity and surrounded it with superstitious ceremony, that while some have been repelled from it as what is peculiarly awful, others have observed it as the very means of salvation. But what says the intelligent Christian? "I believe in the sole authority of Christ to appoint rites and ceremonies. I believe that he has instituted this as a perpetual memorial to the world, of his death: and to quicken *my* lively remembrance of this great event, in obedience to his command, I observe it for this purpose; and according to his promise, I expect his presence and his grace in the observance." What more need any one want or wish than this? Is not the penitential, believing, loving, joyful, obedient remembrance of Christ the highest state of

mind to which a Christian can rise this side of heaven? For people that love the sentimental, the imaginative, the poetic, the mysterious, this will not be enough; but for those who understand the religion of the New Testament to be the influence of truth received through the aid of the Holy Spirit by faith, it is all that is necessary for a life of godliness.

Faith, and not fancy, is the proper state of mind at the time of receiving the Lord's Supper. There is much misconception on this subject in the minds of many good people. Instead of allowing their understanding, during the time of celebration of the Supper, to be conversant with the *truth* there represented, they are employing their fancy in conceiving of the *fact* there set forth. What I mean is this, instead of the mind, and heart, and conscience being refreshed by faith in the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, they are all the while endeavouring to picture him personally to the imagination, nailed to the cross, with the blood streaming from his temples, his hands, his feet, and his side; and thus work up the emotions by this scene of sufferings. They bow, in fact, before a crucifix, though the crucifix is in the imagination instead of being suspended upon the wall. Every body is aware of that power of the mind to call up before it by conception an absent scene, or person, or object; and this can be done in reference to the crucifixion, as well as any other object. Now it is not the design of the Lord's Supper to do this, but to establish us in the belief of the *truth* that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and to keep up our hope of his second coming: and our work of faith at the Lord's table is, to rest with blessed confidence and peace on this sure foundation.

Faith in the Lord's Supper has special reference to Christ as our sacrifice for sin, not to the exclusion of other views

of his person and work, but still it pre-eminently relates to this. This view implies other views. His humanity only died, or could die upon the cross, but without the Divinity to which that humanity was mysteriously and inseparably united, there could have been no atonement. The atonement, rather than the example of Christ, is the subject of commemoration; yet in making that atonement, Christ exercised the deepest submission to his Father's will, and the most exemplary patience; and it was these dispositions of his mind that united with the agonies of his body to make a propitiation for our sins. So that there can be no separation of one view of Christ's person and work from the other: they are all united and form a glorious whole. Yet they may, like the colours of the rainbow, be viewed separately, though thus combined. It is therefore the death of Jesus—the breaking of his body and the pouring out of his blood upon the cross, we are here called upon to commemorate. The Lord's Supper is a standing, glorious, delightful embodiment of the great doctrine of the atonement. It is the exhibition of that fundamental truth in a most impressive form to the senses. It is a visible, material comment upon that passage, "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." How sweetly does the Christian meditate in this ordinance, or should do so, on sin pardoned and God glorified. There, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other.

Nor does faith leave out of consideration any of the other collateral objects and designs of the Lord's Supper. It is not only a memorial of Christ's first advent, but a pledge of his second. "Ye do thus shew forth the Lord's death till he come." The bridegroom and husband of the church has, for wise and ever gracious purposes, left his bride and spouse in the wilderness: but he has given her

not only a promise, but a pledge of his return to take her to himself. He is gone away into the heavens, but he will come again without a sin offering unto salvation. "Meet," said he to her, "meet often at my table, and think and talk of me, and keep up the expectation of my second coming." This is one part of our business and object, to think of Christ's re-appearance. In this exercise of belief, both at the Lord's Supper and at other times, Christians generally are very deficient. We do not think enough of Christ's *second* coming. What would be said of the wife, who, when her husband was away in another country, could be happy without him, and be contented to think rarely about him? On the contrary, how the loving wife longs in such circumstances for her husband's return. "O when will he come back," is her frequent exclamation. Wife of the Lamb, church of the Saviour, where is *thy* waiting, hoping, longing for the second coming of thy Lord? Is this *thy* blessed hope, as it was that of the primitive church? O Christian, art thou not wanting here? Every morsel of that bread thou eatest at the sacramental table; every drop of wine thou drinkest, is the voice of Christ saying to *thee*, "I will come again and receive you to myself," and should draw forth thy longing desires, saying, "Come Lord Jesus; even so, come quickly."

And then it is a *joint* participation—hence it is called the *communion* of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are to believe in the Holy Catholic Church. "We being many are one bread, (loaf,) and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread," (loaf.) There in that one loaf, yet consisting of many parts, is the emblem of the unity of the church. The Lord's Supper exhibits this, and the believer receives it, and rejoices in it. To him it is matter of inexpressible pleasure to be able to say, "One Lord, one faith, one hope. We are *all* one

in Christ.” He breaks through the barriers of sectarianism, and embracing all who partake of like precious faith, and the common salvation, says, “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” It is said, faith worketh by love: and never does it work more powerfully in this way than at the Lord’s Supper. Who that really believes can indulge malice *there*? In what truly regenerated heart can wrath dwell *there*?

If this grace be in exercise at the Supper, it will produce *joy*; for it is a feast, and joy becomes a feast: penitential *humility*, for there we are reminded that though reconciled, we were once enemies to God by wicked works: *love*, for every thing says to us, “See how he loved *you* :” *holiness*, for there it is declared, “He gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works :” *devotedness*, for how forcibly and pathetically are the apostle’s words addressed to us *there*, “Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body and your spirit which are his :” *hope*, for there we are reminded that when he who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory: *brotherly kindness*, for these are the members of the same body, redeemed by the same blood, the objects of the same love, and those who are to be our friends through eternity: *charity*, for there is represented to us the propitiation not only for our sins, but the sins of the whole world. Yea, what grace is not cherished, or what corruption is not mortified, by a believing observance of the Lord’s Supper?

Such are the exercises of faith in the Supper of our Lord.

CHAPTER IX.

STRONG FAITH, INCLUDING THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

GROWTH and maturity of strength are the general laws of life, from which feebleness and a stationary condition are the exceptions. This is as true of the spiritual life, as it is of vegetable and animal existence, and indeed is set forth in the metaphors by which christian vitality is represented in the Word of God. The Christian is compared to various trees and animals, all, of course, importing advancement, growth, increase. Whatever is good tends to what is better, and it can be only through neglect or opposition that this tendency is checked. Yet in the *Divine* life it is in many, perhaps we may add in *most* cases, so neglected. Professors are contented, as children, to be always babes ; as pupils, to be always in the alphabet of experimental religion. It would seem as if the least degrees of holy excellence would satisfy them, as if they had no ambition ; no earnest desire to “*grow in grace* ;” no agonising endeavour to be “strengthened with all might in the inner man.” What a prayer that is of the apostle for the believing Hebrews, “The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work.”—Heb. xiii, 20-21. Make you *perfect* ; not only in one thing but in *every* good work. The Scriptures dwell much, very much, on that word *perfection*. And so ought we. Our aim should be *perfect*

faith—perfect peace—perfect love—perfect hope. It is not enough to have faith, but our aim ought to be after *strong* faith, yea, “*the full assurance* of faith.” The love, and desire, and pursuit of other things, increase with possession. It is so with money—with knowledge—with fame. The desire after these things is never satisfied. The incessant longing is for more, and the incessant cry is “give, give.” So should it be with the believer. To be satisfied with what he has, is a presumption that he really has nothing.

It must be evident to every one, that faith is from its very nature, and in reference to all things, susceptible of degrees. In this respect it differs from demonstration. There are all degrees of belief, from a state of mind in which doubt so far unsettles persuasion, as almost to change it into preponderating unbelief, up to that plenary conviction which excludes all doubt. There may be the perception of evidence, which is like the glimmer of a star amidst the clouds of night, scarcely visible at times; and there may be that which is as the full blaze of a cloudless sun at noon-day. It is so in general matters, and it is so in spiritual ones. Strong faith then in regard to the latter, means *a full persuasion of the truth of God’s promises in the face of some difficulties which seem to oppose their performance.* The putting forth of strength on any occasion, at least in the case of a creature, seems to imply a resistance to be overcome, and an effort to subdue it. There *can* be no difficulties in any given case in the way of Omnipotence, but there may be in *ours*. Now this is strong faith, to take the promise, then look at all the obstacles which seem to hinder its accomplishment, and yet to say, “No matter, though these difficulties were ten times as great as they are, it must be fulfilled, for it is the

Word of God." It is strong faith, when we have nothing else but the Word of God to depend upon; and when, though all things else are against us, still we believe without misgiving that it will be done. It is a great thing *really* to commit the soul, or even any of our greater temporal interests, to the simple promise of God, when we have nothing else to rely upon: and it is not only great but difficult. "When," says Dr. Owen, "men come to close with the promise indeed, to make a life upon it, they are very ready to question and enquire whether it is possible the Word should ever be made good unto them. He that sees a little boat swimming at sea, observes no great difficulty in it; looks upon it without any solicitude of mind; beholds how it tosses up and down, without any fears of its sinking. But now let that man be required to commit his own life to sea, to that bottom, what inquiries will he make? What a search into the vessel? 'Is it possible,' he will say, 'this little thing should safe-guard my life in the ocean?' It is so with us in our view of the promises; whilst we consider them at large, as they lie in the Word, they are all true—all yea and amen; all shall be accomplished; but when we go to venture our souls upon a promise, in an ocean of wrath and temptations, then every blast we think will overturn it: it will not bear us above all these waves. Is it possible we should swim safely upon the plank of a pinnacle in the midst of the ocean?"

This subject will be best illustrated by an example: and we will take that of Abraham, of whom the apostle has these remarkable words, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform."—Rom. iv, 20, 21. Now here was a promise given that he should

have a son; here were also apparently insuperable difficulties; he and his wife were past the age of procreation; and here also was Abraham's strong faith: he firmly believed that God would perform the promise, notwithstanding these difficulties. See how strongly it is set forth,—every expression is emphatic, and we will therefore briefly comment upon each: “*Against hope, he believed in hope;*”—all the arguments which should beget hope in him, were against him. What ground could there be for expecting that two bodies, in this respect dead, should be the source and fountain of “many nations?” Yet notwithstanding all this, he believed in hope. Why? Because *God had promised*. He had *only* the promise of God. No matter. He had that. It was enough. And he would for the same reason have believed if God had promised him ten sons instead of one. It was then added, “*He was not weak in faith.*” This is only a negative form of the other expression. It is a mere weakness of faith, though some may think it the strength of our reason, that leads us to lie poring upon the difficulties and seeming impossibilities that lie against the promise. Abraham being not weak in faith, thought these things not worth his consideration. It is a beautiful expression. He considered not the difficulties—did not take them into account—cast not a look at them—but considered only the promise. He seemed as much taken up with the promise as God was with the purpose; and difficulties seemed as completely lost sight of to the omnipotence of his faith as they were to the omnipotence of God's power. This is the right frame of mind, to be so taken up with the promise, as to see nothing else but that and its performance. “*He staggered not at the promise through unbelief.*” It is not merely said he did not *fall* only; he did not even

“*stagger.*” A man may stumble and stagger over a stone, who may not fall over a precipice: but such was Abraham’s confidence in God’s truth and power, that all the difficulties did not make him stumble even for a moment. His faith stepped over them all with the same ease as a giant would over an obstacle that would stop lesser and feebler men in their course. He had not unbelief enough to make him trip in his course. “*But was strong in faith, giving glory to God.*” Here is the *positive* form of the expression: his faith was strong enough to believe without a moment’s hesitation, that though now a hundred years old, and his wife coeval with him, he should be the father of many nations. Then his *giving glory to God*. This comes in very beautifully. Nothing honours God more than faith, except it be *strong* faith. This it is which treats God as being worthy of confidence. Are not we complimented, honoured, gratified, when others who are dependent upon us say to us, “I fully confide in you?” So is God: trust in him honours him as a God of truth, wisdom, power, and goodness. Confidence is a homage to all God’s natural and moral attributes at once. It is treating him as God. Little do Christians think how much God is dishonoured by their weak and hesitating trust; or glorified by their prompt and strong dependence.

And what was the basis of Abraham’s faith? “*Being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform.*” To settle ourselves upon the all-sufficiency of God for the accomplishment of such things as are altogether impossible to any thing else, is confidence indeed; and worthy of our imitation. It is also the wisdom of faith to pitch peculiarly on that in God which is accommodated to the difficulties wherewith it has to wrestle. Is Abraham to believe that from his dead body must

spring a whole nation? He rests on God as "*he that quickeneth the dead.*"

Were it necessary, we might dwell at equal length on Abraham's faith in a future period and another scene of his history, in reference to the child that was thus promised and given to him in his old age; and we should see that this act of confidence in God's truth and power was no less remarkable than in the present instance. "By faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead."—Heb. xi, 17-19. On the life of Isaac depended the fulfilment of all the promises which God had given to the patriarch, and yet now he is commanded to slay that son and offer him up in sacrifice. If Abraham had been surrounded with children, or if no promises had been made connected with the life of Isaac, his faith would not have been so remarkable; but when there was that only child, and all hung upon his one life; then to believe that it was his duty to immolate him, and leave God to find out a way to fulfil his own word,—this *was* strong faith. He believed that if Isaac were reduced to ashes, God could and *would* raise him up again. There was no other way in which the promise could be fulfilled; and in the persuasion of that, he stretched forth his hand and grasped the sacrificial knife, which in one minute more had been employed to slay even this precious child of promise. Illustrious believer! Illustrious faith! No wonder that Abraham is called the father of believers and the friend of God. We wish to point out the strength of his confidence as consisting in this, that he had nothing but the promise of God to rely upon; and believed that

in opposition to the most formidable difficulties, it would be fulfilled.

If other instances were necessary, we might point to several individuals under the New Testament dispensation. The faith of the apostles and the first Christians in looking through the outward poverty and meanness of our Lord's appearance, and recognising under that forbidding exterior, the Son of God and the Messiah : a persuasion the more remarkable on account of the opposition and rejection of Christ, by the rulers and bulk of the Jewish nation. The case of the Syrophenician woman mentioned in Matthew xv, is much in point as an instance and illustration of strong faith. We have already considered this, and we now only refer to it. She would allow no obstacle to hinder her suit. Like Abraham, she against hope, believed in hope. Her perseverance conquered the Saviour, and drew from him the language of commendation and delighted surprise, "O woman, great is thy faith." Perhaps the brightest and most remarkable instance of faith in all the New Testament, is that of the penitent thief who was executed by the side of our Lord. I can never read that account without wonder. For this man in *his* own circumstances, and in the circumstances of Christ, to recognise in him who was crucified at the same time and in the same place as himself ; who was mocked and reviled by his enemies and abandoned by his friends ; who cried out amidst his anguish, and acknowledged that he was forsaken by his God ; who was challenged to prove his claims by descending from the cross ;—to recognise *him*, I say, as the Son of God and the Lord of glory ; the King of heaven who had the seats of Paradise at his disposal ; and to present to him that prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom :"—this was on some

accounts the most extraordinary act of faith on record. Who should have thought of going to Calvary at the time of the crucifixion, and finding in one of the malefactors crucified with Christ, the most triumphant instance of confidence in the Saviour, to be found in the pages of the New Testament? What difficulties had *his* belief to surmount, and it *did* surmount them.

We will now put opposite to all this, some instances of a *feeble* faith. Several are at hand. The Israelites left the house of bondage in Egypt at the command of God, and under the positive assurance that he would conduct them in safety to the promised land of Canaan. With this command and promise, and with all the evidence they possessed that God had thus authorised and warranted their expectations, no difficulties ought to have appalled them. Neither Pharaoh's host pursuing them, nor the Red Sea before them, nor the dreariness of the wilderness, nor the want either of bread or water, nor the number or power of their enemies, ought to have disheartened them. True, their difficulties were often great. What then? Had not God promised to be with them? Was not the token of his presence in the midst of them? They had the most positive assurance of protection and provision, and their obvious duty was to say, "No matter what obstacles or enemies lie in our way to Canaan; we shall go to it, and nothing can keep us from it." Instead of this, every difficulty filled them with fears, doubts, alarms, distrust, murmuring, and rebellion. Now here we see believing trust giving way to difficulties. They had the promise, but they doubted its fulfilment, till their doubts degenerated into absolute unbelief.

In the New Testament we meet with instances no less instructive. Peter walking on the water shews the power

of faith ; his fearing and sinking when the wind rose, shews its weakness. He had the command of his Master to step down upon the waters, and though the waves had run mountains high, he was safe, and ought to have felt so. True, it seemed a perilous situation, but he had Christ's warrant for it, which he should have trusted. And he deserved the rebuke he received, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" On other occasions the apostles appear to have doubted of their ability to cast out demons and work miracles, the difficulties of which appeared to them greater than those of some other cases. They had the commission and the ability, but they staggered through unbelief. We abide then by our definition of strong faith ; it is a firm belief of God's Word in the face of difficulties ; or in reference to some things which are attended with what to reason *appear* to be improbabilities.

We must now attempt to distinguish it from unwarranted presumption or delusion, with which some are but too apt to confound it. Faith in all cases is founded upon the Scriptures, or in other words, has for its object something which God has revealed, either in the way of command, promise, or threatening, so that where there is no revelation, there can be no belief. Now it is to be feared that some imagine the strength of this grace to consist rather in the confident persuasion of something God has *not* revealed, than the expectation of what he has. With them it is a going on beyond the line of revelation, and looking for what is not included in the promise. A man is said to be very strong in faith, when he has a very confident persuasion that he shall receive some good thing, either temporal or spiritual, which in its individuality is nowhere promised. Some have a very confident assurance of the conversion of a particular individual : and this they

call strong faith. But is the conversion of *that* individual promised by God? If not, how can it become matter of belief? So in reference to any course of action, or to the result of any particular undertaking, many talk of having a strong faith in its success. But has God promised this successful result? If not, how can they believe it? Our imaginings are not God's promises, and to trust to the former, without having the latter to support them, may be faith in our expectations, but certainly not in God's promises. Whatever we *do* must have the authority of a command or principle of revelation, expressed or implied, and whatever we *believe* must have the warrant of a promise either general or particular. But is there not sometimes an inward as well as an outward revelation, the belief of which is as truly faith as confidence in the written Word? That there was such in the case of inspired men is very true: and that even now in very extraordinary cases there may be such still, we would not positively deny. But such cases when they *do* occur, carry their own light with them, and verify their Divine origin by results. In ordinary cases, and such are almost all that occur, belief must be regulated by the Word and providence of God. Let it be once granted that strong faith means a strong persuasion of our own mind, apart from the Word of God, and what enthusiasm and fanaticism are we not immediately thrown open to? It is this confounding of faith with presumption, or the impressions upon our own minds with the revelations of the Word of God, as an object or rule of faith, that has not only led to the wildest enthusiasm, and the most extravagant mysticism, but in some cases to assassination and murder. The test of a strong faith is not therefore how much we can believe which the Scripture has not revealed, but how much we can believe which the

Scripture *has* revealed, and which seems to be attended in its performance with difficulties to human reason insuperable. To obtain this state of mind, therefore, our aim should be not to retire into ourselves, in order to quicken our own imaginings, or to stir up the depths of our own feelings, but to go out of ourselves to commune with the Word of God, and with God himself, through the medium of his Word.

I now go on to show in what circumstances, and in reference to what things in the Christian life, the strength of faith may be exercised and displayed. And here we may mention two distinct spheres of influence, or classes of objects, which call for this putting forth of a strong belief. The objects of the first class are spiritual ones. It is the work of a powerful belief to grasp and hold fast the truths essential to salvation, and confidently to rest upon them, notwithstanding the doubts and difficulties which to reflecting minds present themselves. There may be not only a true belief, but even a strong one, where at times considerable doubts may arise in the mind, and many difficulties present themselves. To the enquiring and penetrating mind, difficulties will appear, from which less reflecting believers are happily free. The doctrine of the Trinity and the complex person of Christ; the sovereignty of God, and the responsibility of man; the atonement of the cross, justification by faith, and the work of the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of the body and the eternal state, will all at times present vast difficulties, and occasion some doubts. And oh, what mental agonies have some endured in struggling with these spectral forms of unbelief. The house that is founded upon a rock may be assailed by the storm and the flood, and that it stands against the assault is a proof of the strength of the foundation. The veteran

oak of centuries' growth may be shaken by the wind, and the very fact of its resisting the blast is a proof how deeply rooted it is in the earth. So the strongest believer may be troubled with doubts and fears at times, which would entirely overthrow a weaker conviction than his. This—this is the mighty power of faith—its trophy as well as its triumph; when amidst all temptations from without, and all the reasonings and doubts from within, the believer holds fast by the great truths of salvation, and calmly says, “I *know* whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.”

There is a very striking and instructive illustration and confirmation of this, in the life of Dr. Payson, which I give from memory, not having the volume by me. During a long season of affliction his mind was much perplexed and troubled by certain doubts, difficulties, and objections, which to his view at that time, seemed to stand connected with Divine revelation. In so strong a light did these present themselves to his reason, that all the most formidable objections of all the infidel writers he had ever read, appeared to him as mere babble compared with those which rose up in his own mind. And he said he would not for the world publish his doubts, for he thought by so doing he should unsettle the faith of half Christendom. What must have been the power of *his* faith so completely to master the sophistry of infidelity in its most appalling form and its most violent assaults, and with the force of evidence, to put this array of doubts, and difficulties, and objections to flight? It is not the mind that never doubted, perhaps because it never examined or reflected, but that *has* doubted and yet triumphed over its doubts, that exhibits the strength of true belief. The mind that grasps a positive proof on moral sub-

jects with a tenacity that loosens not its hold under the counteracting influences of difficulties, is strong in faith indeed. Let it therefore be no source of perplexity to those who are thus troubled, that they see difficulties hidden from less inquisitive minds, as if their faith were feeble and fluctuating; if at the same time they hold fast their confidence and the rejoicing of their hope, stedfast unto the end. Such doubts, as the celebrated Robert Boyle says in his beautiful autobiography, are in the souls of Christians, like the tooth-ache in the body, painful but not mortal.

It is strong faith which enables sinners who have gone to great lengths in sin, and who have sinned amidst great aggravations, to believe and hope in the promise of mercy. Must we not admire the confidence of the three thousand of the murderers of Christ, who on the day of Pentecost, within sight of Calvary, could so calmly expect such a sin to be forgiven? So again, what an assurance of faith had Saul of Tarsus, when the Lord Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, and though his conscience was then loaded with the guilt of the murder of saints, he believed that even these crimes would be all forgiven. We may be sure that there is not in any one of our prisons a wretch so vile but that God is willing to blot out all the sins of his polluted life, and make even of that slave of vice and vassal of Satan, a child of God, the very next hour. But how hard for *him* to believe this! What confidence in the truth, mercy, and power of God, must it have been which enabled the witty, the licentious, the infidel Earl of Rochester, to hope in Divine mercy! Not that it is more difficult for God to forgive such a profligate than the most moral person that ever lived; or that there is such a wide difference, all things taken into account, between sinner and sinner. But how many and how great are the obstacles

which such sinners themselves see in the way of their own forgiveness.

We may also bring under review the case of notorious *backsliders*: especially the case of David. One wonders almost less at his commission of the crimes of even murder and adultery, than that he could even bring himself to believe that God would forgive him. I marvel at that power of faith which could hush the accusations of conscience, and the reproaches of his own soul, so far as to allow him ever to come into a state of peace. For him, under all the aggravations of his crime—its complexity—enormity—publicity—and season—so far to believe God's promises of forgiveness, as to hope for pardon, and cry out in accents of praise, "O the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Had he a *right* to this peace? He had. Was it proper for him? It was. How did he acquire it? By believing God's promise. Yes. And had he not come to this confidence and peace, he would have sinned against God by unbelief. True it is, that though he believed that God had forgiven him, he ought never to have forgiven himself: and with peace, so far as the hope of pardon should produce it, there ought ever to have been associated the profoundest humiliation and self-abhorrence. I do not say, as some have most incautiously affirmed, that the greater the sinner the more welcome to Christ; but I do say, the greater the sinner the stronger is the confidence that trusts in Christ; and the greater the confidence, the more glorious and welcome to Jesus. It is a sight for heaven to wonder at—angels to rejoice over—devils to hate—man to imitate—and God to delight in; to see a poor creature polluted with almost every sin, broken-

hearted yet not despairing—penitent and turning with loathing from his sins, and yet confidently relying upon the mercy of God in Christ, for a full, free, and cordial forgiveness.

It is strong faith which enables the soul to hold fast its grasp on the truth, and its profession of Christ in the face of suffering and death. The apostle, as we have already said, conducts us for displays of this grace into the trophy-house of the church, and points us to those who through faith “were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all have obtained a good report through faith.” Ye noble army of martyrs, who looked at the cross of Christ till ye were inspired with a heroism to suffer on your own, we see here the nature, the power, and the all-but omnipotence of that principle which enabled you to overcome the love of life and brave the horrors of a cruel death. Christ in all his glories, as he appeared to the martyr Stephen, standing at the right hand of God, *must* have been seen by you in those awful moments. Heaven, with its ineffable grandeur as it was surveyed by the apostle Paul in his rapture, must have opened to your view. Eternity, with its ever-rolling ages, as its perspective spreads out before the immortals, must have filled your field of vision. Faith, faith, gave a reality to all. It became “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Nothing

teaches us the power of belief in Christ like this. To see weak, timid, delicate women, who once trembled at the sight of blood and the sound of groans, so raised above the fear of death as to bear the exposure of the amphitheatre, the attack of wild beasts, or the agonies of the stake, with a heroism that surprised even their persecutors. How wonderful this ! If the power of a cause be ascertained by its effects, what shall we say to this ? Oh, what would it not enable us to do, if we were really to give ourselves up to its influence. A spirit of self-denial and sacrifice is also an instance *now* of the operation of the same principle. When we see a man surrendering the favour of friends, the prospects of gain, the comfort and ease of life, and the respectability and influence of connexions for the sake of the gospel, and thus enduring that species of persecution which is a kind of perpetual martyrdom ; we feel that this also is the great fight of faith : such a man is not loaded with fetters—nor immured in dungeons—nor burnt at the stake—but he is still one who demonstrates what is the exceeding greatness of God's power to those who believe.

The power and strength of this grace are exhibited in those who are eminent for the holiness of their lives, the spirituality of their affections, and the heavenliness of their aspirations ; of whom it can be emphatically said, “ They walk by faith, not by sight.” In whose whole experience,—their thoughts, feelings, and volitions,—there is a marked and unusual predominance of the invisible over the visible, the spiritual over the carnal—and the eternal over the temporal. Their “ conversation is in heaven.” Having become citizens of the new Jerusalem, they conduct themselves accordingly, and seem to be, as well as feel, that they are strangers here, belonging to another state, and ever

turning their attention homeward. Their eye is ever upward; their steps are ever forward. They act and endure as if their sympathies were with something else than things seen and temporal, and appear as if they were in communion with some one that was invisible. They have a real, personal, and intimate fellowship with Christ, even as if they saw him with the bodily eye. The objects that surround them, and the scenes which are passing before them, affect them but little; for they are habitually looking at others which infinitely surpass them. They do not give up their interest in this world—its social ties and charities are not abjured; but all is subordinated to that other world which the Scriptures reveal. They love the house of God, and enjoy the means of grace. They are much in prayer and reading the Scriptures; but they stop not in these outward observances, but pass through them by a living, vigorous faith, to God, and Christ, and heaven. About them there is something of the abstractive elevation and wrapt devotion of the recluse, combined at the same time with all that is practical, rational, and social, in the zealous followers of the Lamb. In short, they *have* a true, intelligent, and deep conviction of the great realities of the Bible, and they live under their influence, and walk under the power and constraint of them. It is not a mere cold, heartless assent they give to these matters, but they embrace them and are persuaded of them. Jesus *is* precious to them. They *do* see his glory and feel his inestimable worth. He *is* their righteousness and strength; and they live, and abide, and walk in him. There *is* a mighty transforming power ever going on upon their souls by the faith of him.

Such persons have come to the assurance of faith. By which we intend a delightful consciousness that they *have*

committed their souls into his hands and are safe. They have "*the full assurance of understanding*,"—Col. ii, 2 ; which means a clear, comprehensive, soul-establishing acquaintance with divine truth ; or as Doddridge renders it, "the richest and most assured understanding of the gospel." This is introductory, and leads on, to the full unwavering conviction of its truth, which is *the full assurance of faith* ; and this ends in, and is connected with, "*the full assurance of hope*." By the latter, as distinguished from the second, is generally considered a strong persuasion of our own personal interest in the blessings of salvation. Between these two there is an obvious distinction,—one signifies belief, and the other a *consciousness* of belief. One expresses itself thus, "I *do* really and fully believe in Christ." The other thus, "I *know* I believe in Christ." But though they are distinct in their nature, they are inseparable in their existence. The belief of the gospel is the spring and origin of hope. We cannot hope if we do not believe ; we cannot but hope if we *do* believe. If hope springs from faith, it follows that in proportion to the simplicity and firmness of our faith, must be the strength and liveliness of our hope. To say a man may have a very strong belief in Christ, and yet a very feeble hope, or a very feeble belief and yet a very strong hope, is something like a contradiction in terms. As is the faith, so must be the hope. A strong belief will produce very strong fruits of faith ; just because a mighty principle in operation will be followed with proportionate effects. The fruits of faith must bear a proportion to itself. Hence the full assurance of faith must be followed with the full assurance of hope.

By this assurance, we do not mean a bold and confident method of speaking of our state, leading us to say, "I am as confident I am a child of God as if a voice from heaven

declared it; and am as sure of getting to heaven as if I were there." All that is intended by assurance in Scripture, appears to me to consist in a satisfactory persuasion that we have so believed in Christ as to be interested in the blessings of his salvation, and to be enabled to look forward with pleasing expectation to eternal glory. Such a persuasion itself admits of course of various degrees. If it be asked whence this assurance comes, I answer, not by any witness or testimony granted directly to the soul in the way of revelation or impression; but in the way of consciousness and comparison of our faith as to its fruits with the Word of God, according to the declaration of the apostle: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."—1 John, v, 13.

We see then how to answer various questions concerning the assurance of hope. Is it of the essence of faith? As hope is a distinct thing from faith, and is *rather* the fruit of faith than its essence: so assurance is itself rather a fruit of faith than an identity of nature. Yet as hope inseparably springs from faith, there must in all sane states of mind ever be as much hope as there is faith; and if hope be weak, faith must be weak. We are again asked why so many Christians who are supposed to have faith, have no assurance? Many answers may be given to this. *First*. Because many who really have faith, mistake as to the nature of assurance, by supposing it is a state of mind which ~~for~~ ever excludes all doubts and all degrees, and prompts a man boldly to *say*, "I am as perfectly sure of salvation, as if I were before the throne of the Lamb." I should rather put the case thus: "I feel I am a poor, sinful, guilty, lost creature,—worthless, helpless, hopeless. But I really believe the record that God has given us of

his Son. Here I place my hopes. Christ I am sure is my all. And I feel him infinitely precious to my soul. I dare affirm too I love him. And I am desirous and studious to keep his commandments; and therefore though I should hesitate to adopt the bold and confident language of some in reference to my state, yet I have no serious doubts that I am a child of God; and am actually living in the peaceful enjoyment of that blessed persuasion." *This* is the language of assurance. The man who can say this is not only a believer, but he knows he is; and this knowledge is assurance. *Secondly*: another reason why so many professors are without this is, because they either have no faith at all, or their faith is so feeble as to produce no hope, and therefore of course no assurance of hope. No wonder multitudes are without assurance: it would be a wonder if in their state of mind they really possessed it. Their possession of it would be the depth of deceit and the power of delusion. They have no deep conviction of sin—no solicitude after pardon—no joyful reliance on the Saviour—no peace in believing—no fervent love to Christ. On the contrary, they are so worldly and so careless, and so utterly destitute of all holy feeling, that they *can* have no consciousness of faith—no fruit of holiness. And where there is, or may be supposed to be, a germ of this grace, it is so cramped in its growth, like a plant in an ungenial soil and atmosphere, that it never grows, and always appears in a sickly and dying state. *Thirdly*, we answer another question, How is this assurance to be obtained? Observe the order. Begin with the full assurance of the *understanding*. Get by study and prayer, a clear, rich, full understanding of the gospel. Go on to the full assurance of *faith*. Open the whole mind and heart to the deep, abiding, practical conviction of the great truths of the gospel. Come by faith into a

personal communion and friendship with Christ. And thus giving all diligence, you will come into the full assurance of hope unto the end.

We now go on to consider the exercise of a strong faith in reference to providential dispensations and things temporal.

It begins with a firm persuasion of an over-ruling Providence, so comprehensive as to include the destinies of empires and worlds, and so minute as to extend to individuals. A Providence which is ever active, directing, controlling, and subordinating all things to its own purposes and plans. It is a conviction of this great truth, so deep, so satisfying, and so tranquillising, as not at all to be shaken by the chaotic aspect of human affairs—the prevalence of gigantic evils—and the delays which occur in introducing the great meliorating processes and reforming means. A weak belief must give way before the deep mysteries—the confounding events—the defeats of what is good—and the triumphs of what is evil, which are perpetually going on in our world's history. The stream of Providence is so tortuous, so dark, apparently so turbid, and occasionally so devastating, that it requires faith at the full stretch of its power to believe that it is the work of God and not of chance ; and that if the work of God, it is just, and wise, and good. The page of history, both civil and ecclesiastical, is a problem to the solution of which nothing is equal but a profound, strong, and intelligent belief of the doctrine of Providence. Leaving the history of nations and of the church of Christ, and coming to that of individuals, we still find scope and necessity for the exercise of the strongest confidence in God.

It is, of course, such an exercise as this to believe in the darkest dispensations of Providence affecting ourselves, that it is all from God, and must therefore be wise, and just, and good. To be able really to satisfy ourselves, as well as to

say to others, "*It is well.*" "I am sure it is right," says the strong believer. "I cannot tell *how* it is right. I cannot imagine for what special end it came. I can find no clue to the purpose—no key to unlock the mystery. It appears to me one of the profoundest secrets of that Great Being whose glory it is to conceal a matter. But I am as confident it is right as if the whole were transparent to my reason, and I could see the event in all its connections, bearings, and results: as if, instead of being wrapt in clouds and thick darkness, it were written and irradiated with sunbeams. I cannot see: but I believe. It is for God's glory and my ultimate benefit. I *know* that all things work together for good." The darker, the more confounding, the more disappointing the event, the stronger the faith that assures us it is all right. It is the belief of mysteries—the walking on amidst shades and darkness grasping the arm of God, believing that he *is* leading us, and will lead us right—the giving up all into his hands, saying, "I cannot see a glimmering of light: I cannot see where to place my next step; but I can most implicitly trust in the wisdom, power, and truth of God. I follow like a little blind child, grasping the hand of his father."

Times of great straits and difficulties are seasons and opportunities for the exercise of this grace. God is always the Christian's best refuge, and often his only one. He is reduced sometimes to mortal extremity, and is compelled to say, "He *only* is my rock and my salvation. My help cometh from the Lord. No one else *will* help me,—no one else *can*." He is shut up to God, and therefore to faith. Sense, reason, both fail. No door of escape presents itself, nor any way of relief. There is nothing left for him to do but to take up the promise and carry it in the hand of faith, knock by prayer at the door of mercy, and as he stands there to say, "My soul, wait thou only

upon God, and let thy expectations be from him. Yes, Lord, thou hast bid me come, when I could go nowhere else. And here according to thy command and promise I will remain—waiting, trembling, yet believing and hoping.” The poor widow with her fatherless children; the pious honest tradesman in his difficulties; the Christian mother with her hungry babes, feeding upon her last crust; the friendless believer with not one to counsel, comfort, or support him; the devoted minister with his scanty supplies; and a thousand other cases of deep necessity and pressing want, have no other to look to but to Him who heareth the young ravens when they cry: and there are among them some who have faith enough to say, “I am sure he will come and help me. My heavenly Father knows the necessities of his dependent child, and he will come in his own time, and in his own way, and I will wait for him. My bread will be given me, and my water will be sure.” This is strong faith.

The prospect of difficult duties, new situations of trial, and perplexing circumstances, calls for the exercise of this strong confidence in God. When God by a vision of glory called Isaiah to a special mission, his heart sunk within him under a sense of his vileness; but when God sent his seraphim, and with a live coal from the altar touched and purified his lips, he received such confidence that he said, “Here am I, send me.” When Jeremiah was called to the prophetic office, appalled with the difficulties which presented themselves to his mind, he recoiled from its responsibilities, and exclaimed, “Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak for I am a child.” When God reproved him for his timidity, and promised him his Divine help and support, he yielded himself to the call and went courageously forward. So when Paul was converted from a persecutor to an apostle of Christ, no sooner had the Lord

laid before him his mission, and promised to stand by him, than he accepted the commission and went boldly forward in his career. Yet what difficulties must he have known he should have to encounter. No matter. He had the promise of help from Christ, and though they were a thousand times greater he could face them all; for he believed in Christ. Whatever duties the Lord calls us to, he will most assuredly provide us ability to perform them. Perhaps the most striking instance on record, beyond the range of Revelation, is that of Luther, when cited before the diet of Worms. His friends attempted to dissuade him from trusting himself in the midst of his enemies. "You will be burnt alive," said they, "and your body reduced to ashes as they did with John Huss." What was his reply? "Though they kindle a fire whose flame shall reach from Worms to Wittemberg, and rise up to heaven, I would go through it in the name of the Lord, and stand before them—I would enter the jaws of the behemoth, break his teeth, and confess the Lord Jesus Christ." One day when he had entered into an inn, and the crowd was as usual pressing around him, an officer made his way through, and thus addressed him: "Are you the man who has taken in hand to reform the Papacy? How can you expect to succeed?" "Yes," answered Luther, "I am the man. I place my dependence upon that Almighty God whose Word and commandment is before me." The officer deeply affected, gazed upon him with a mild expression, and said, "Dear friend, there is much in what you say, I am a servant of Charles, but your Master is greater than mine—He will help and protect you." Here, in Luther, was courage, faith, heroism, such as the world has rarely seen. Did the Lord Jesus leave his servant defenceless? Did he? No: but gave him a mouth and wisdom which all his enemies were able neither to gainsay nor resist. We

are not called to such duties as those of the great Reformer, but there may still be duties which to us appear as much above our strength. Let us only satisfy ourselves they *are* duties—let us only take care that we go only where Christ has sent us, and undertake only that to which he has called us, and we may step as firmly, speak as boldly, and expect help as confidently as did Luther in the diet of Worms. No matter what scenes of trial, difficulty, or suffering, are before us—do they lie in the way of duty?—are they of God's appointment?—then it is no presumption, but a part of the exercise of faith to say,

“Let earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurl'd;
Still I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world.”

And how shall we obtain this strong faith?

Let us earnestly desire it, for it brings glory to God: it is productive of great comfort and benefit to ourselves; it will be a glorious example to others; and it will prepare us to enjoy the beatific vision with greater felicity. If we do not value it, we shall not covet it; and if we do not covet it, we shall never have it.

Let us contemplate the perfections of God; the glory of Christ; the truth, reality, and felicity of heaven; as set forth in holy Scripture. It is not by any working upon our own minds subjectively, but by contemplating the realities of Scripture objectively, that we shall grow in grace. By looking at the great objects of faith, we grow in faith. The objects draw out the acts which are appropriate to them. To grow in love with beauty, we gaze upon it. To be fired with moral excellence, we meditate upon it. Belief waxes stronger and stronger by meditation. It grows before the cross and the portals of heaven, and the throne of a faithful and covenant-keeping God.

Let us exercise what faith we have. Instead of despising the day of small things in ourselves, and refusing to believe, or to carry on a course of belief because it is so feeble, let us believe as we *can*, and continuing in this exercise, we shall by-and-by believe as we *should*. There are two extremes to be avoided,—despising weak faith, and being satisfied with it. It is a sin to be weak in grace ; but it is a mercy to have any grace. *This* grace, like every other, grows by exercise—therefore exercise it.

Let us contemplate the noblest examples of believers. The study of the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews would be of service to us. Yea, the whole of the Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testaments, are full of biographical illustrations of the power of faith. Who can rise from the perusal of Abraham's history, or Paul's, or even of many uninspired pieces of biography in which this great principle has been conspicuous, without feeling a perceptible growth of it in themselves ?

Let us recollect our own experience. And every one should be conversant with this. Perhaps there is no history which is so profitable to us as our own, when it is properly read. What fulfilment of promises—what dissipating of fears—what realizations of hopes—what helps in duty—what comforts in affliction, do we find there ! And of what service may these be to us as aids and props to our faith in its future exercises.

Let us pray for this great blessing. Lord, increase our faith, is a petition that suits us all. Whose faith does not need to be increased—and who does not desire this increase ? That man *must* be a self-deceiver or a hypocrite, who does not covet to grow in grace ; and he must be totally ignorant of the means of growth, who neglects to pray for the dewy influences of the Holy Spirit, and the vivifying rays of the Sun of Righteousness.

CHAPTER X.

FAITH IN REFERENCE TO THE BLESSINGS OF THIS LIFE.

EARTH is to its inhabitants neither a paradise nor a desert. If it have not all the beautiful scenes and productions of the former, so neither has it the dreariness and desolation of the latter. If the ground be cursed for man's sake, it is on the other hand blessed for Christ's sake. It is called in the language of poetry, "a vale of tears," but it is not less true that it is sometimes the vale without the tears—wears a smiling aspect—and reflects the light of God's graciousness and bounty. We know very well that man's chief portion lies in the blessings of salvation, and the hope of the life to come. These are so vast as almost to reduce all others to nothing. The possession of pardon, peace, and holiness, is so great a present inheritance; and the hope of an eternity of pure and perfect felicity is such an amazing expectation, as might seem to render us absolutely indifferent alike to poverty and riches; pain and ease; obscurity and renown. How little would it signify to him who was going to take possession of a kingdom and a throne, whether he travelled through a desert or a garden, fared hardly or sumptuously by the way, or whether he had or had not all accommodations and conveniences on the road. His thoughts would be so engrossed with the permanent scenes of greatness, grandeur, power, and wealth before him, as to be almost insensible to present privations or comforts. So a Christian travelling to glory, honour,

immortality, and eternal life, might be supposed to enter most fully into the apostle's exhortation, "This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."—1 Cor. vii, 29-31.

Still, as we are made susceptible by our bodily organization of pain or ease; by our mental constitution of enjoyment or discomfort from surrounding objects; and by our social relationships of gratification or disturbance; we cannot be wholly unaffected by the circumstances in which we are placed. Stoicism is no part of Christianity. And even the very sight by faith of the glories of immortality, is not intended to annihilate the value of the blessings of this life.

It might seem to some that faith has nothing to do with the things of this world; that all its objects are invisible and eternal; and that the objects of sense cannot be the objects of belief. True it is that its highest exercises relate to the world which the eye of sense cannot reach: but still as there may be and are some adjuncts—some circumstances of the things of this world, which are as much matter of belief as the invisible realities of eternity, there is room for the exercise of it even in reference to these.

That this is the case is evident from the fact that they are not only necessary for our maintenance and comfort in this world—that the want or possession of them may be made subservient to our spiritual welfare; but they are also the subjects of promise under the New Testament, as well as under the Old. It is in the former that we find

the declaration, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."—1 Tim. iv, 8. It is there also we have the assurance, that if we seek first the kingdom of God, all other things shall be added to us.—Matt. vi, 33. It is not said, Seek the kingdom of God, and grace and glory shall be given you; but those things of which Christ had been speaking—food and raiment. It is admitted that promises of temporal blessings occupy a somewhat different place and a much smaller space under the New Testament, than they did under the Old. Under the latter, they were, so far as the Sinai covenant is concerned, the principal incentives to obedience, and the removal or withholding of them, the most frequent matter of warnings, threatenings, and punishments. Plenty, health, peace, and family comfort, while yet the spiritual blessings of the covenant of grace were so imperfectly revealed, and therefore so dimly apprehended, were the more frequent subjects of promise to the Jews. This seemed to suit a dispensation, in which God dwelt among the people by the visible symbols of his presence, and over which he presided as its political Sovereign and Head. And there is no doubt that the bestowment of temporal blessings was more closely associated with obedience to the Divine command, than is the case under the Christian economy. The good things of the latter are "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."—Ephes. i, 3. Hence the language, and its meaning, of the apostle, when speaking of Christianity as contrasted in this respect with Judaism: "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."—Heb. viii, 6. No one can read the Old and New Testaments

without being struck with the difference of the promised blessings in each—with the fact how little is said of spiritual blessings in the former, and how little is said of temporal ones in the latter. A fact which is replete with instruction, as showing not only the vast superiority of the Christian dispensation over that of the Jews; but also how much it is incumbent upon Christians to let their spirit and conduct answer to their dispensation, in that eminent spirituality and heavenliness of mind, which are manifested in a supreme, constant, and practical regard to things divine and eternal.

Still there *are* promises of temporal blessings contained in the better covenant, and therefore room for faith in reference to them. And then the various degrees in which God bestows these blessings, and the various exercises of mind which this difference of dispensation calls for, together with the helps or hindrances these things may furnish to the divine life of the soul, furnish ample room and opportunity for the activity of this holy principle of confidence in God.

By the blessings of this life, we are to understand health, success in trade, wealth, and whatever pertains to our comfortable abode in the present world: and the question now is, in what way faith is maintained in regard to these. This may be done,

FIRST. In regard to THE AUTHOR and BESTOWER of them. God is the source of all created good: not only the Maker of all creatures, but of all the good that is in them. He is not only the Creator of all things, but by his Providence the Disposer of all events. All individual beings—all their relations to each other—all their adaptations to man's comfort, are to be traced up to his wisdom, power, benevolence, and arrangement. "In him we live,

and move, and have our being." We not only *believe* the world is governed by general laws, that is by an invariable, except in the case of miracles, connection of cause and effect: but at the same time we believe that the mechanism of nature and Providence is not like that of a clock, which, when wound up, may be left to go of itself; but is rather like that of a machine which requires the constant superintendence of the engineer, whose attention can never be dispensed with for a moment. Property, both personal and real—success in business—health—connections—elevation in life—renown—are all at his disposal. So true are the words of the apostle, "The living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."—1 Tim. vi, 17. Faith shuts out chance and regards Providence in every thing. It is not enthusiastic and visionary, regardless of general laws, so neither is it Pantheistic, resolving *all* into general laws. It adds Providence to nature, and recognises God the Overlooker, Ruler, Regulator, as well as God the Creator. It stops not in second causes, but ascends to the first; traces every ray of prosperity, and every shade of adversity, to Him as its Source. It admits the operation, and employs the instrumentality of all means for an end which are suggested by reason—recommended by science—and approved by experience—and then ascribes results to God. This is the especial province of faith. Science goes no farther than the established order of nature—but faith goes on to Him that established it: faith without interfering with science, soars above it. Science stops in the vestibule of the temple: faith led by revelation goes in and adores the Deity who is there enshrined. There may be metaphysical and logical difficulties connected with the bestowment of temporal blessings, or the averting of evils, under a governmental system of general laws, affecting the doctrine

of Providence and its special interpositions, but the believer troubles not himself with these. He may not be able to state *how* God can interfere on his behalf, either without disturbing general laws on the one hand, or actually performing miracles on the other. It is enough for him to be persuaded by the Word of God that there are such interferences, and in this he confides, blessing God for the bestowment of every good as a gift of his hand, and submitting to every affliction as his wise and gracious appointment.

SECONDLY. Faith regards the MEDIUM of all temporal blessings—and that is, the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Man could no more have received temporal blessings without a Mediator than he could spiritual ones. But for the scheme of redeeming mercy, our race must have ended with the destruction of the first man. In the garden of Eden the sepulchre of Adam must have been raised, and with it the tomb of all humanity in him, beneath the branches of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. There must have begun and ended the history of man. But God had purposes of grace and mercy, and man was spared, with reference to the coming of Him, whose advent was announced in the mystic terms of the first promise. This world from that hour was to become the scene of discipline and probation for eternity. To such a discipline and probation a mixed condition seemed most adapted, in which much that is pleasurable to human nature should be united with much that is painful: in which much that calls for submission on the one hand, and for gratitude on the other—much that is the type of better things, and much that foreshadows more bitter pains in the world to come, should be blended. All our blessings, therefore, flow to us through the medium of the cross—that is the

grand reservoir of all temporal blessings as well as spiritual ones. Not a ray of mercy illumines the dark domain of devils—it never did and never can—for Jesus died not for them. Every thing on earth that is good and pleasant, proclaims that we are in mercy's domain—all points to the cross as its medium, and to heaven as its design. The beauties of nature—and the bounties of Providence—as well as the richer blessings of grace—all are the expression of a Divine benevolence—tokens of God's good-will—and indices to the purposes of his heart toward us as regards a still brighter and happier world. The health that glows in our bodily frame should remind us of the better health of the soul which his grace is willing to establish; the success which follows our industry, and increases our wealth, is a memento to seek the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to lay up treasures in heaven; the respect or renown which we acquire among our fellows is an incentive to seek the honour which cometh from God; while the possessions of earth, taken as a whole, are motives to possess ourselves also of "the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." All God's dealings in Providence with us here have reference to, and are connected with, his purposes of grace; and both together have reference to the mediation of Christ. It is indeed delightful, most delightful, to see all flowing to us—our health—our property—our friends—our respectability—all tasting of the love which was manifested in our redemption—all gilded with the glory of that cross on which the Saviour loved and died. So that it seems evident from this, that all men, the whole world, partake in some sense and in some degree of the benefits of Christ's death. The whole earth is the domain of mercy, because our Lord Jesus has come upon it to mediate between God and man,

He died for the whole world—the whole world are invited to possess themselves of the spiritual blessings of his redemption, and *do* actually possess many temporal blessings. He causeth his sun to rise upon the just and the unjust. Even the poor blaspheming infidel, who denies his mission and reviles his religion, is daily in the receipt and enjoyment of many blessings, not one of which he could possess, but for that Saviour whom it is his horrid business to deny and traduce. Yes, even he comes in for a share of the blessings of the cross, while with impious ingratitude he insults the hand that bestows them. But to the Christian the God of Providence is as truly an object of belief as the God of Grace, and every mercy of a temporal nature is additionally precious, as being redolent with the fragrance of that Name which is above every name.

THIRDLY. Faith is exercised in the manner of SEEKING the blessings of this life.

They are in themselves legitimate objects of pursuit. Who will deny that a man may seek health, or success in his lawful calling, or the respect and esteem of his friends and the public, or even renown by discoveries in science and inventions of art? These things are all right and good in themselves, and are only wrong when sought with inordinate desire by improper means, or for wrong ends. Here then is the first operation of faith in seeking a temporal blessing—a persuasion that we are authorised to seek it, because it is one of those things which God has promised to bestow. This only can warrant us to seek it—to ask it in prayer—or to expect it. So that the first question we should ask ourselves, is this, “Am I really authorized to desire and pursue this object? Is it such as my circumstances, and situation, and the Word of God, warrant me to expect? If a man were to desire

such success in business as shall secure him *immense* wealth; or such advancement in life as shall raise him to the high places of the earth; it is evident that he is indulging a wrong desire and is setting out in pursuit of that which he has no warrant to expect.

Having then settled with himself that the object he desires is a lawful one, his faith will express itself in prayer to God. What the prayer of faith is in reference to temporal blessings has been already explained in a previous chapter, to which the reader is referred. That it is lawful to make temporal things the subject of our petitions to God is evident from our Lord's prayer, where we are taught to say, "Give us this day our daily bread;" and also from the apostle's exhortation, "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God."—Phil. iv, 6. Of course our prayers should be chiefly for spiritual things, and God is most pleased with such as are so; but they may and should also embrace temporal ones; and God does not despise even these. A kind father loves most the request of his little child which asks for instruction in what will most please his parent or improve his own mind; but he does not reject the solicitation for some innocent gratification, some infantine toy. Prayer, when sincere, even in reference to temporal things, is itself an expression of faith, and a very high one too. It is acknowledging God in his existence, his attributes, his government, his providence. And how sweet a relief is it to the Christian's own mind to say, "I have laid it down at the feet of my Father who is in heaven. I have committed it into his hands. He has the charge and disposal of it now. Infallible in wisdom, omnipotent in power, and infinite in benevolence, he must and will decide

for the best." Prayer does not, however, discharge the Christian from the obligation to use the proper means to obtain a blessing. If he seek health, he will take advice and medicine; if success in business, he will be diligent; if the friendship of man, he will employ conciliation. To use means without prayer is atheism; and to use prayer without means is superstition; while to use both is faith. To those who adopt the former, we say, "Fall down and worship God;" to those of the latter class, "Up and be doing."

It is an especial business of faith in seeking any earthly blessing, *to keep us from using any improper and forbidden means to obtain it.* This divine grace is too lofty and noble to stoop to base shifts and mean devices: too holy either to get good or avoid evil by sin. It will rather trust God, though it has nothing, and sees not how the blessing is to come, than go to forbidden means and sources to seek a supply. "Better," says the proverb, "is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right."—Prov. xvi, 8. This is a beautiful aphorism, and as true as it is beautiful; and expresses the disposition of a holy man never to help himself out of straits and difficulties by unjust or improper means; but to wait any time, in any necessities, in the way of God and duty. "Faith," says Dr. Manton, "looks upon unjust gain as a certain loss; like flesh stolen from the altar with a burning coal in it, which fireth the nest of the bird that steals it." This may be read by some persons in great perplexity and trouble about some temporal blessing of a monetary nature, and who are anxiously looking round for some means of relief,—a situation as pregnant with danger as it is with solicitude. In such a case, some forbidden but very probable means of assistance present themselves. "Do that," says

the tempter, "and you are extricated at once." "No," says the Christian, "I believe in God—in Providence—in the Bible—in truth and justice; and I cannot, I will not, dare not do it; but I will wait any time till God sends relief by better means; and if he do not, I will hold fast my integrity till I die. I will have peace of conscience though I am ruined." I believe the man who has faith enough thus to wait for God's appearance, will never wait in vain.

What scandals have been brought upon the Christian profession, and what disgrace upon some men's characters, as well as distress into their hearts, by means of relieving themselves from money difficulties, not absolutely fraudulent in intention, but dishonourable in their nature, and disreputable in general estimation: they had not faith enough in God to believe that he would help them in *his* way; and under the power of unbelief they helped themselves in *their own*, and brought a blot upon their character. Had they given themselves to agonising prayer, and to a hopeful expectation—had they believed as they might have done, that if God did not avert the impending ruin, he would support them under it,—they would have been saved from disgrace, and very probably have been helped out of their difficulties.

The same trust in God will keep down *undue care*. It will enable the person to say, "Well, I have now done all that diligence, prudence, and great exertion can do—all I dare do—all that can be done to obtain the object of my desire. So that if I do not succeed, I shall have the testimony of my conscience that my failure will not be attributed to myself; and at the same time, the assurance of my religion that the cause of ill success lies with God, who does not see fit to grant me the desire of my heart :

why therefore should I go burdened with solicitude, or torment myself with unnecessary care? I will lay the burden upon the Lord, and calmly and peacefully wait his will." This is faith.

Impatience is another state of mind which belief in God's superintending Providence will suppress. There is nothing more likely to rise up in our mind when pursuing an object with strong desire and which is yet withheld from us, than this, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." The eagerness of our wishes can bear no delay. We fretfully and murmuringly say, "How long?" To which God chidingly yet gently replies, "Be patient therefore unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient: stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh?"—James v, 7, 8. To this the believer replies, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me. The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."—Hab. ii, 1, 3.

"The calm of expectation
Has stolen into my breast,

and has tranquillized my fears, soothed my anxieties to rest, and made me serenely wait to see how it will go with me."

In seeking the advantages and comforts of the present life, we are in danger of *envy*. Others may succeed earlier and better than we, and may be in possession of what we want; and this may give rise to the most dreadful and

tormenting passion that can possess the human bosom. Now "charity envieth not:" but charity is the work of faith. If we really believe that God disposeth of man's lot—the lot of our neighbours as well as our own—and that God is wise, sovereign, just, and benevolent, in all his dispensations; such a conviction will do much to extinguish those heart-burnings which are produced by the sight of another's superiority. Do you *really* believe that God has made the difference—that he had a right to give to your neighbour and withhold from you—that he does all things well—that he consults your good rather than your ease—that what is good for another might be bad for you—that he has given you far more than you deserve—that he has blessed you with richer blessings than temporal ones—that perhaps your spiritual ones exceed those of the objects of your envy? Do you believe this, *all* this? Then surely such faith will in proportion to its strength extinguish this dreadful passion. If you give yourself, professing Christian, up to the indulgence of envious feelings, either you have no faith at all, or your faith must be very weak.

In seeking temporal blessings, faith will impose *moderation of desire*, and repress inordinate ambition. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not."—Jer. xlv, 5. This advice of the prophet to Baruch, is a word in season for us all. It is our over-fondness for the good things of this life that makes us impatient under its evil ones; and our ambition for greatness that makes us so indifferent about goodness. Men who are anxious to make a great figure in the world, usually make a small one in the church. As the tops of high mountains are usually barren, while fruits and flowers grow in the vales below, so the altitudes of earthly things are as commonly bare of

spiritual verdure, of the flowers of piety, and the fruits of righteousness. Belief in God will repress this immoderate anxiety after wealth. It yields obedience to the injunction, "Let your moderation be known to all men." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It fixes its eye upon better blessings, even spiritual and heavenly ones. It says to the Christian, "Thou art seeking a heavenly crown, and wilt thou inordinately desire a large share of earthly baubles? Wilt thou hinder thyself in the race, of which eternal life is the prize, by loading thyself with the cares and anxieties necessary to amass great wealth?" He who has opened his heart to such ambition must surely have let down his belief of a glorious eternity.

Dependence is another thing which will undoubtedly spring from a belief that all blessings, even temporal ones, come from God. Much wisdom and strength; prudence and patience; are necessary to succeed in life; and to succeed upon Christian principle, much forbearance, self-denial, and resolution to resist temptation. For all this we must depend upon God, and all this God has promised. "My grace is sufficient for thee," is an assurance which every one may apply to his own case; that is, every one who wishes to be industrious without being covetous: who desires to be led in the middle path between ambition and indolence; and who in the pursuit of things honest, would not be led on to things superfluous—superfluous at least for all purposes but the indulgence of pride and the gratification of vanity. For this, let us depend upon God's promised assistance, and cherish in all our exertions a feeling of entire reliance upon him.

It is the work of faith *to desire nothing that may be injurious to our spiritual interest.* With a true Christian

his soul's salvation is his great thing—his one thing needful; and he considers that only as really good which is good for his soul. He has believed in Christ for life eternal. His heart has grasped this, and will not loose its hold upon it; and therefore whatever is incompatible with this he wishes not to have in his possession, and prays not to be allowed to let go his tenacious adhesion to this supreme object. This is his prayer, "Much as I desire this object of my pursuit, yet if in my ignorance I have mistaken that for a good which thou O God deemest to be evil for my spiritual interests—if thou seest it would bring a blight upon my soul—if it should cool my love for thee, or enfeeble my strength, or deaden my hope of glory everlasting, do thou in mercy withhold it; for I had better be denied any thing than be allowed to depart from thee, or for thee to depart from me." *This is faith.*

And the same state of mind will of course prepare us to bear the denial of our requests, and the failure of our efforts with submission, contentment, and cheerfulness. It is faith to ask blessings with fervour from God; but it is greater faith to take denials with placid resignation. If things fall out contrary to our expectation, they are not contrary to his wisdom; if against our wills, yet they are in accordance with his; and though against our desires, yet not against our salvation. We shudder at the horrid blasphemy of him who said, if he had been by when God made the world he would have ordered things a great deal better than they now are. Yet is there not a degree of this impiety in our murmuring thoughts, when things turn out otherwise than we desired? Do we not feel as if we could have ordered matters better? It is a beautiful sight and one too rarely beheld, to see a Christian calm and

satisfied amidst the wreck of his hopes, and the bitterness of disappointment, and to hear him say, "I have lost my object, but I am sure it is all right."

FOURTHLY. We are to consider how faith exercises itself in the condition of those WHO POSSESS the blessings of this life, especially in considerable abundance.

It gratefully *acknowledges*, of course, the bounteous hand that bestows them. It does not say, "My hand hath gotten me these;" but, "God hath given them to me." It traces up every stream of comfort to him as the Divine Fountain. The believer is entirely convinced that he owes every thing to God's unmerited goodness. He does not merely look round with complacency upon all he has, but looks up with gratitude to his heavenly Father, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. His enjoyment of his mercies is elevated and sweetened by the assurance that they are the gifts of a Father's hand, and not the results of chance, or even the products of his own skill, diligence, and industry. He loves to view God in all things and all things in God. His comforts are so many mirrors from which the Divine benevolence is reflected upon him from every side. As he lies down on his bed in health he says, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." As he takes his seat at his well-spread table, he exclaims, "Thou makest my cup to run over." As he walks in his garden and enjoys his calm retreat, he lifts his heart in grateful acknowledgement for the Eden of his delight. As he moves onward amidst peace and plenty, respect and regard, he gives utterance to his feelings in the language of the psalmist, "What shall I render unto God for all his benefits towards me."

Nor does it stop here, for it *enjoys* them as well as

receives them, as the gifts of God—as blessings *given* to be enjoyed. When God was about to bring his people into the land of promise he commanded them by the lips of Moses, “to rejoice in every good thing which the Lord their God had given them.” And to the same effect is the language of the apostle, where in opposition to the ascetic doctrines of those who forbid the lawful enjoyment of God’s gifts, he declares that “every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving : for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.”—1 Tim. iv, 4, 5. There is no faith, but much positive unbelief in a stoical indifference to the bounties of Providence. It is the province of this grace to preserve the due medium between idolizing and despising these lesser mercies. It does not eradicate our natural desires and delights, but directs their growth, prunes their luxuriance, and prevents their attaining a strength which would impoverish the plants of grace, and a height which would chill them with their shadow. When Adam was perfect before his fall, he lived in a Paradise—yes—and enjoyed it too. And he to whom God has given a garden of Eden now, or any thing approaching it, may enjoy it also, provided, like Adam in his innocence, he sees God in every thing, and allows every thing to lead him to God. If a man does not enjoy his blessings, he cannot be grateful for them. That temporal blessings are to be viewed in subordination to spiritual blessings is very true, but this does not prove that they have *no* value. That a Christian derives his chief bliss from spiritual blessings is quite clear ; and he is no Christian who in the midst of the greatest abundance does not say, “ Whom have I in heaven but thee ; and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee : ” but to forbid a secondary delight in the good things of this

world is sanctioned neither by reason nor revelation. The true frame of mind is that which "the poet of the sanctuary" has thus expressed,

"Thanks to thy name for meaner things,
But they are not my God."

Yes, it is the promise and power of faith to lift up the possessor of earth to heaven; and perhaps this is almost its greatest achievement. For a man to take delight in heaven, and find his chief happiness in spiritual things when he has nothing else to delight him; to repair to the fountain when all the cisterns are broken and the water spilt; to turn for relief to the light of God's countenance when every other light is put out; to give up the world when it has become a desert, and enter the garden of the Lord;—is a far less triumph of faith than to be spiritually-minded amidst temporal possessions; to use the world and not abuse it; to enjoy an earthly Paradise much, but still to enjoy the hope of a heavenly one more. To him who can do this, we say, "O man, great is thy faith! What but the realization of 'the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,' could enable thee thus to overcome the world when it seemed all but certain it would conquer thee by its smiles?"

It is by faith that temporal blessings are sanctified to our spiritual good. That afflictions should do us good; that the want of temporal blessings should be sanctified to our good; is easily conceived, for it often occurs; but how seldom is prosperity the means of raising the tone of our piety, and increasing the power of godliness. This is the Spirit's rarest work. In this respect, the works of nature and grace seem to be unlike each other. The flowers and fruits of tropical climates grow with great

luxuriance, and attain to considerable magnitude and beauty; while those of alpine regions and arctic temperature are dwarfish and stunted. But in the spiritual world it is amidst the cold blasts and the hard frosts of adversity, that the trees of righteousness and the plants of grace attain to their greatest stature and beauty; while they wither and droop under the warm sun of prosperity. Hence then, it is a glorious work of grace to grow holy by health, wealth, and renown. Yet there are such cases, though they are few, of Christians whose mercies inflame their gratitude and love, increase their devotedness, and draw them into nearer communion with God. This should be the case with all in prosperity. Ought we not to love God, and hate sin more and more, in proportion as he blesses us? Ought we not to make *his* goodness a means of increasing ours? Ought we not to borrow from his gifts so many new views of the sinfulness of sin which is committed against a being of so much kindness, and against so many motives for crucifying it? Ought we not by a spirit of mortification to pluck up the weeds of our hearts, and bring them out to wither and die in the sunbeams of his goodness. But what can lead to this short of the power of an ever-active faith in God—in Christ—in heaven—in eternity? And this can. As the bee wanders over the garden, and extracts the materials of honey from every flower, so does faith go through the earthly Eden of the Christian, and draw the materials of holiness from every comfort. It is well therefore to recollect that though the *want* of earthly comforts is a great judgment, the abuse of them is greater. So the *possession* of earthly comforts we account a great mercy, but the holy use of them is a greater.

Belief in the Scriptures leads the possessor of the good

things of this life to employ them for God's glory and the good of others. Christian charity is in every case the work of faith. Why do not the men of the world employ the talents of wealth, rank, knowledge, and influence for the honour of him who gave them these things? Why do they lavish all God's gifts upon themselves? Because they do not believe that God gave them; or if they admit this, because they do not consider that they were given to be employed for his glory, nor that an account must be rendered to him in the day of judgment for the use of them. And why is it that professors of religion are so backward in their zeal, and so stinted in their liberality? Why is it necessary to use so much persuasion to induce men to give up their time, health, and property, for the promotion of God's cause? Why, but because their belief in God's Word is so feeble? Did they really believe that God had bestowed all this upon them for the promotion of his cause in the world; that he will require at the last day, a strict account of every farthing; and that he will reward with his gracious approbation every act, and sacrifice, and gift, and labour, done in simplicity for his glory, would they not give largely and freely as he has given to them? A stronger faith in the church of Christ would render useless and unnecessary, much of that logic and rhetoric which are now employed to call out the resources of our various institutions. When professors shall look upon their possessions with the eye of faith, the hand of liberality will at once be widely spread, and all that is necessary will flow forth without the bidding of man. It is a beautiful act of this grace to write "holiness to the Lord" on our merchandise and upon "the pots and bells of the horses."—Isaiah xxiii, 18. Zech. xiv, 20.

The completion of this work of faith in reference to the

possession of earthly blessings, is to be willing to surrender them to God when he calls for them. We believe he gave them ; we believe he preserves them to us ; and we believe that he alone can take them from us. If health decay, it is he that touches our frame. If riches take to themselves wings and fly away, it is from his hand we receive them, and at his command they take their flight. Hence, the believer says, "I am immortal till God calls me hence. I am secure of my possessions till he takes them from me. And as he does nothing but what is wise, and just, and good, and does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, I am sure that he will not call me to give up any one good thing I possess but for a sufficient reason and in a proper time." There is something pleasant in this. A believer may cast away all undue solicitude about losing his mercies, and may sit down with an easy and unforboding mind, assured that they will never be removed from him but by God ; and not even by him but for the best reason.

FIFTHLY. We now consider the case of those who are DESTITUTE of many temporal blessings. And these are the larger number in the family of God. Such persons are often in considerable perplexity. They read in the Bible certain promises, such as we have already adverted to, and they do not seem, at least in their experience, to be fulfilled. They do not possess these blessings. To relieve their solicitude and help them out of their perplexity, we would make one or two remarks :—

Promises of temporal blessings are not absolute, but conditional. They are made with an implied restriction that we shall have them in such kind, measure, and season, as God sees best. "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."—Psalm xxxv, 10. But then it

must be left for him to determine what things *are* good. And *ought* it not to be left with him? Would we not wish it to be left for Omniscience to determine this? That is good for us, as we have often said, which is good for our interest and God's glory. Who can judge of this but God himself? Who would not rather have the matter put thus generally and conditionally, than to have it said, They shall want nothing; but have every thing they ask?

The promises of temporal blessings are sometimes fulfilled in our posterity. "The just man walketh in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him."—**PROV. xx, 7.** The blessing seemeth to lie asleep for awhile, and then it riseth up in the seed of the good man as if the more vigorous for its slumber. It may be, he is put to hard shifts, and much labour, and some anxieties to provide for his family, and dies and leaves little behind him; but that little God wonderfully blesses, and so his end is accomplished, though not during his life.

The promises of temporal blessings which seem sometimes to fail, fail on our part, rather than on God's. We neglect to perform the conditions on which they are suspended, and lose the benefit through neglect of the means. We are not promised health without care to preserve it, nor success in business without ability, industry, frugality, and perseverance.

And now how will faith operate in those who after using all proper means to obtain temporal blessings are still destitute of them, at least to a considerable extent?

They too must have recourse to the doctrine of an overruling, all-wise, all-disposing Providence. This comes alike to all, to those who have and those who want. They must conclude this, that he who gives to others denies to them—and does it in the exercise of the same wisdom

and the same love. He could have given them if he would, and he would have given them if it had been best he should. He has not—therefore it is right. It is a quaint but true remark of Dr. Manton: "That is best for us which is *fittest*, not what is *largest*. If you were to choose a shoe for your child's foot you would not choose the largest but the fittest." Would you not choose by the same rule for yourself? The armour of Goliath, weighty as it was, would not suit David, even Saul's did but encumber him. Adaptation is the essence of a blessing, all else but its accidents. This is the language of faith—"That is best *to* me, which is best *for* me. And God gives what is best." This is wonderfully strengthened by the words of the apostle, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."—Romans viii, 32. The logic of this fine argument a child may understand. He that gave us in wonderful, mysterious kindness Jesus Christ, his own, proper, only-begotten, well-beloved Son, to die for us upon the cross, to obtain for us salvation, how shall he not give us, anything, every thing, all things else, that are necessary for our eternal welfare? What, asks the believer, did he give heaven's richest jewel for me, and will he deny me a little of earth's dust? Did he give me in Christ eternal salvation, and will he deny me a little present temporal comfort if it were for my good? I could as soon believe a monarch would give me his crown and deny me a crumb. No his cross is to me a guarantee that I shall want nothing else that is for my good. I may be destitute of some things which others have; but having Christ, I must have all else, however little it may seem to be, which is necessary for my eternal well-being.

Hence the believer is conscious that if he be without many

temporal blessings, he has all spiritual blessings in heavenly things and places in Christ Jesus. "Christ has been made of God, unto him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."—1 Cor. i, 30. To him the apostle says, and he believes the declaration, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."—1 Cor. iii, 21-23. He believes that this is true in reference to *him*, and in the exercise of this belief he can bear the privation of many things which others possess. And then he looks *up* and sees all heaven opening to receive him, and pour its fulness into his soul; and looks on and sees eternity with all its ages waiting to swallow up mortality of life. He feels that he wants but little here, and shall not want that little long; and that his present privations will only prepare him more exquisitely to enjoy the fulness of delight which is in the presence of God, and the pleasures which are for evermore at his right hand.

Under the influence of all these considerations he bows down not only *with* submission but with contentment to his lot. His faith reconciles him to every privation, and enables him to say, and triumph as he says it—"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." 2 Cor. vi, 10.

CHAPTER XI.

FAITH'S EXERCISE IN REFERENCE TO AFFLICTIONS.

It is a painful fact that many a sinner walks in a flowery path to perdition, and goes merrily to his everlasting ruin. It is, on the contrary, as certain that many a saint travels by a rough and toilsome road to heaven, and ascends to glory amidst many tears. Our Divine Lord has set forth this in the most awful of his parables—the rich man and Lazarus. If we looked only at the outward and present condition of these two men, we should say one is the type of all that is felicitous, the other, of all that is miserable. But who that looks in upon the heart of the two, and onward to their eternal abode, would not a thousand times rather be Lazarus with his poverty, sores, and beggary, feeding at the rich man's gate upon the crumbs which fell from his table, than the wealthy possessor of the mansion, with his purple and fine linen and daily luxurious fare. Look up at the one who has dropped all his poverty, borne by angels to Abraham's bosom; and then look down upon the other, stripped of his splendid garments, deprived of his luxurious living, and from the midst of his torment begging for a drop of water to cool his parched tongue, and there see the end of sanctified poverty and of unsanctified wealth. Many are the afflictions even of the righteous. Notwithstanding they are the children of God and the heirs of immortality, even they are not exempted from the common lot of

humanity, as described by the patriarch of Uz, where he says, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." Yea, on the contrary, they are afflicted because they *are* the children of God. "For if ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?"—Heb. xii, 7. The church of God, though

"A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness,"

is not, like Paradise, fenced in from sorrow. There is a *tearless world*, but it is reached by a *vale* of tears. As those who are exposed to such a variety and such a constant recurrence of trials, we need some principle to sustain us under them. We must either be petrified by the stone-making process of some stoical philosophy, into cold, lifeless statues, or we must find some source of consolation. It is but few who can reach to the apathetic insensibility of the former state; the great bulk must find comfort or oblivion somewhere. We are in danger in times of trouble of resorting to many things that are inimical to our peace and to our holiness. Afflictions are not only evil in themselves but are likely also, if care be not taken, to produce evil. They not only *always* lead to sorrow, but often to sin. A wounded spirit has frequently been the occasion of a burdened conscience. The wormwood and the gall of sorrow have fermented into the poison of iniquity, by impatience under the hand of God, and by revengeful feelings towards the human instruments of our griefs. How apt are we to sink into heartless inactivity—hopeless despondency—sinful distrust—and overwhelming sorrow. In the dark and gloomy night of tribulation, when the sun of our prosperity has set—when the clouds of adversity

have so overspread the heavens that not a star twinkles—and the tempest rages, how much do we need something to cheer us, something to keep down those unbelieving thoughts of God and his Providence which are then so apt to rise, and to relieve that intense wretchedness which then too often takes full possession of the soul. And where shall we find it? What can do it? Philosophy? Miserable comforter! It may, as I have said, in some few cases, petrify the heart and turn the man into a stone: though it can rarely do this, for nature resents the violence thus offered to it, and even from the rock itself drops *will* sometimes ooze, even if streams do not flow. Reason may say to the sufferer, “Weeping will do you no good, it will not bring back the comfort you have lost, or remove the affliction under which you suffer.” “No,” says the patient, “and it is for that I weep, because my sorrows are remediless even by my tears.” Will change of scene, or occupation, or business, or pleasure, bring consolation? No. They may divert the mind for a little while from the cause of its sorrows, and produce a temporary oblivion of them; but a lacerated heart carries its wounds with it, and though its pains may be lulled, it receives no cure from this source. No. FAITH, faith is the only thing that meets the case: and this *does* meet it. This glorious, wonderful, divine principle, which guards the prosperous man from being injured by his prosperity, sustains the suffering one from being crushed by his adversity. That which is the shade of one from the scorching heat of the sun, is to the other, his refuge from the storm.

We shall now show how faith acts in reference to afflictions.

FIRST. In prospect of them.

It suggests that as we are sinners in a state of probation

—as sorrow more or less is the lot of humanity—and especially as God has declared that whom he loveth he chasteneth,—the true believer *expects* trials. He sees no reason why he should be exempted from them. This expectation, as we shall presently show, does not degenerate into gloomy predictions, painful forebodings, and tormenting anticipations; this were not faith but unbelief—but only checks that unfounded confidence which leads him to say, “My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved,” and produces that surrender of himself to fearless and excessive enjoyment of things seen and temporal, which is the essence of worldliness. Without at all lessening the *proper* enjoyment of present comforts, and throwing dark shadows upon, or uttering croaking voices in the sunny path of prosperity, it simply says, “Since God has forewarned you to expect trouble, do not be immoderate in your joy of the gourd, nor trust so surely in it as if you thought it could not wither.” Faith thus acts the part not of an envious ill-wisher, but of a faithful monitor.

At the same time it believes that no evil can come except God sends it. This is its triumph, to look into the dark unknown of futurity, and to rest assured that no evil *can* come forth from the impenetrable cloud but what comes at his bidding. The doctrine of Providence follows true faith throughout its whole course, which it grasps as the traveller does his staff, upon which he leans equally in sunshine and in storm—which keeps him steady in paths that are slippery, and others that are rocky—and which, whether his way be up hill or down, is still his support. This will account for its frequent introduction in these chapters.

The shafts of sorrow fly thick around us, but not one can hit us, except its flight be guided by unerring wisdom. Job said, “Why hast thou set me as a mark against

thee, so that I am a burden to myself.”—Job vii, 20. An expression which if it imply some terror as though God were shooting at him, implies also some consolation that no arrow could touch him but what came from His bow. So that when the Christian sees the trouble coming, he knows whence it comes, and that it cannot come except God permit it. Oftentimes the storms of Providence, like those of nature, are a long time gathering. We feel the sultry heat, the stagnant atmosphere, and observe the electric clouds, and are prepared for a thunder storm: we stand watching the cumulative masses in the horizon, with something of awe, and under the apprehension which is awakened, we consider that it may after all disperse and not discharge; and even if it should come, we know that God rides upon the whirlwind and manages the storm; and that it can do no harm but what God permits and appoints it to do. “He maketh darkness his secret-place; his pavilion round about him is dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies.” Therefore fear not:

“Thou trembling saint; fresh courage take,
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”

It is the assurance of faith, that if the affliction should come, it will bring its own support with it. Oftentimes the trial, like mountains, appears larger and higher at a distance than on our nearer approach; and like most that is dreadful, less terrific when we are close to it than when seen from afar. Familiarity, which diminishes our delight in what is pleasurable, does the same with our horror of what is painful. But let it be all it was feared, still the Christian, when trustful in God, says and ought to say, “If God should not sink the coming trial to my present

weak faith, he will raise my weak faith to the magnitude of the coming trial. The affliction may not be all I now fear; but if it should, my God will make his grace sufficient for me to bear it. He will not *send* the trial, but *bring* it. And I have his promise that he will never leave me. I hear him saying to me at this moment, 'When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.'—Isaiah xliii, 2;—xli, 10. What then *ought* I to fear—*can* I fear—*will* I fear? I will go forward to meet the coming affliction; for I am going on to meet an all-wise—all-gracious—all-powerful God."

Faith takes off the mind thus from painful anticipations of the future. It complies, to its own happiness, with the merciful admonition of Christ, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."—Matt. vi, 34. This is a beautiful and most merciful exhortation; but then, no man in prospect or fear of future trouble can very easily obey it, till he believes that as God is taking thought for the future on his behalf, he need not be anxious himself about it. Reason, I know, suggests that he who does not with solicitude anticipate future evil till it comes, suffers it but once; while he who is *always* anticipating it, suffers it as many times over as he thus thinks upon it. Still nothing can keep down these gloomy forebodings, but the assurance that God is caring for the future as well as for the present.

The mind thus taken off from a painful and unnecessary anticipation of future evil, is left to the performance of present duty. This is a most desirable course of action. If some people are so much taken up with the present as to forget the future,—which is a possible and by no means an uncommon case, for there is usually *some* provision to be made for the future—on the contrary, there are many who are so much taken up with the future as to forget the present. Their fears of contingent evils rise so high as to unfit them for the discharge of certain obligations which now press upon them. There is always some duty immediately pressing, from which no probable, possible, or even certain future trial should divert us. It is always an additional aggravation of affliction when it comes, to look back and see something neglected, and thus to go laden with the guilt and enfeebled by the influence of past sins, to encounter future trials. Oh, it is of immense importance to keep a conscience void of offence, not only for present comfort, but for support under coming afflictions. Inconsistencies are sure to find us out in the dark season of affliction, if not before. We need not add to the gloom and sorrow of that dreary hour, by the guilt of past sins, either of omission or commission: but on the contrary, should seek among other consolations, to have “our rejoicing in the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, we have had our conversation in the world.”—2 Cor. i, 12. Close walking with God is as incumbent for our interests as it is for our duty.

Here, perhaps, a question will arise in some minds, whether it is compatible with faith, to pray to God to *avert* an approaching affliction. Most certainly it is, as much so as it is to pray for deliverance from *present* trials, and

as it is to use all proper means for that purpose. Grace does not produce an insensibility to trials; for if there were no feeling, there could be no patience. Submission is our duty; and that implies something that is felt to be an evil, but to which in obedience to God, the mind bows down. Now it is quite compatible both with faith and submission to pray for deliverance from both threatened and endured tribulation, provided our prayers be submissive, and we are willing after all to leave the matter to the *Divine* will, and we stand prepared to acquiesce in the answer God may be pleased to give. The very petition to have the affliction averted or removed is itself an act of faith, since it is an expression of our belief in the providence of God. We have innumerable instances to prove the lawfulness of prayer for averting or removing afflictions, in the Word of God, alike in the way of promises, precepts, and examples; and especially in the highest of all examples, that of our Divine Lord, who in prospect of the sufferings he was then enduring and expected yet to endure, prayed and said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."—Matt. xxvi, 39.

SECONDLY. We now consider the exercise and influence of faith *under* affliction.

The expected trial comes on. God has not seen fit to avert it. The storm bursts upon the head of the sufferer, and what are his views and feelings *now* as a believer? Faith first of all considers sin as the *cause* of sorrow. The believer traces up all his afflictions to this as their original source and cause. Suffering with him is not merely the established and original order of nature, it is the disturbance of that order, the disarrangement of that first beautiful scheme and framework, by sin. God did not make

man to suffer and weep, and he never did suffer and weep till he sinned. The geologist clearly perceives in the broken and confused strata of the earth's crust, not the original and undisturbed order of primæval creation, and the regular unimpeded deposits, as the silent and uninterrupted proceeding of the work of nature; but the proof of some mighty disturbing force which has upheaved the masses and thrown all into apparent confusion. So is it in the moral world. All was order, and beauty, and bliss, at the beginning, but sin with volcanic force has disturbed, broken, and confounded all. This is declared in the Word and received by the Christian; and it is of wonderful potency to bring him to submission and to enable him to justify God in his severest dispensations. He never loses sight of this guilty cause of all his sorrows. Nor does he satisfy himself with going back to the sin of Adam, that first offence which brought in sin, and death, and all our woe; but he dwells upon his own sin—the ten thousand sins both of omission and commission of which he has been guilty, and with devout humiliation under a deep sense of their desert, he exclaims, “He hath not dealt with me after my sins, nor rewarded me according to my iniquities. Wherefore should a man complain, a living man for the punishment of his sins. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, for I have sinned against him.” *This* is faith.

It also recognises God as the *Author* of his affliction. “I was dumb,” said the Psalmist, “I opened not my mouth, because *thou* didst it.” The believer sees God's hand, realises God's work in his sufferings. “That no man should be moved by those afflictions;” said the apostle, “for *ye know we are appointed thereunto*.”—1 Thess. iii, 3. But faith not only recognises the hand of God, for many an unconverted man does this, but the hand of God as a

Father. It is *this* which is its peculiar act. It does not merely believe that the God of providence is in the trial, but the God of grace. Its language is not only "God hath sent it," but "my *Father* sent it:" and while the worldling sullenly exclaims, "It is the will of God, and I suppose I must submit:" the believer says, "The cup which *my Father* giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it?" This is its persuasion, for God has said it, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."—Heb. xii, 6. But this is a secondary act of belief reflected from a primary one. It is the act of one who has already believed in Christ for the salvation of the soul; of one who has really become by faith a child of God—of one who with an unwavering tongue *can* say in the spirit of adoption, "Abba, Father." And it is surprising how many are enabled thus to come to God in affliction, who are filled with doubts and fears at other times. It is of infinite moment for the believer to keep up the sense of this paternal character of God, and his own filial relationship to him. A child will take that from the hand of his father, which none else could persuade him to receive.

In conformity with this, faith considers LOVE as the motive on God's part of all afflictions. They not only come on those whom God loves, but *because* he loves them. They are love tokens, as much so as any thing else that comes from the hand of love. The father chastens his son in love—gives him medicine in love—denies him some things he asks for in love. It is the severity of love I admit, but still it *is* love, and a contrary line of conduct would not be love. But often it requires strong faith to believe this. "What, *this* love, to wither my gourd, and scorch my head by the sun, and beat upon me by his hot fierce blast? This love, to shatter my cisterns and spill

their water upon the ground? This love, to frustrate my schemes and disappoint my hopes, and strip me of my comforts and leave me spoiled and peeled? This love, to fill my eyes with tears and my bosom with sighs?" "Yes," replies God, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." "Enough," says the Christian in his best mood, "Enough, I believe it: and my soul is even as a weaned child." See him when in that frame, he not only "hears the rod," but kisses the hand which uses it. What can we not endure from the hand of love? Let me be assured that a friend loves me and that tenderly, and that all his conduct is dictated by affection, I can bear his reproofs, though they may be somewhat severe. I can submit to his requirements, though they may seem to be rigid. I can allow him to take from me some things which I value, though I may not see the necessity of such sacrifices. My entire confidence in his affection leads me to say, "It must be necessary for my welfare, or I am sure his love would not thus put me to pain. It cannot be to sport with my feelings and see me weep, that he acts thus. I am sorrowful but trustful, for he is wise and he loves me."

Faith is assured that there is a *necessity* for our trials. There is no Scripture it more readily assents to than that of the apostle Peter, "If needs be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Yes, there must be some kind of necessity, or he who loves them so strongly would not thus afflict them. He himself is the judge of that necessity, and with him it must be left. But we are in all cases to be assured that it exists, though oftentimes it is hidden. Hence, the beautiful reply of Dr. Payson, who in his deep affliction was asked if he saw any particular reason for his heavy trials. "No," said he, "but I am as satisfied as if I saw ten thousand reasons. It is the will

of God, and there is all reason in that." Our trials come sometimes when there seems, so far as our spiritual condition is concerned, less need than ordinary for them. And then is the time especially for confidence in God's wisdom and love as to their necessity. When they find us in a backsliding state, and come like messengers to fetch us back from our truant wanderings, we *know*, rather than *believe* their necessity. We see and feel it as clearly as if a voice from heaven declared it. But to be overtaken with some severe visitation of Providence, when the soul is comparatively healthful, and its course is even and un-deviating, and then to say, "I am sure there is some needs be for this, though I cannot see it. It lies hidden somewhere in the depths of God's wisdom and love, where I cannot find it; but I am sure it is there. My Heavenly Father does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, much less his own children: and I believe I am one of them."

It is also assured that the *design* of affliction is good. How beautiful is the language of the apostle: "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."—Heb. xii, 9, 10. Yes, such is the imperfection of human love, that even parental affection is sometimes poisoned and misdirected by passion; and the father corrects his child intemperately, and more from caprice than from judgment, and rather for the indulgence of his own stormy temper than the child's good. There is nothing like this in God. The Divine Father never corrects in a passion; but proceeds to *his* chastisement with the coolness and

calmness of a judge, the love of a parent, and the purpose of a physician. "*He for our profit,*"—never for his own gratification, but always for our good. Certainly not for our *ease*, "for no affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous;" but for our *good*. He is not indifferent to our present tranquillity and comfort, as is evident from the thousand mercies with which he has surrounded us; but he is chiefly intent upon our good: and when these two are in any measure incompatible with each other, he never hesitates for a moment which he will make to give way to the other. A wise physician is not indifferent to the comfort of his patient; but when the question is ease and death, or pain and life, he takes up his knife and proceeds with as much tenderness as possible, but without delay, to amputation. *He* consults the *life* first, and ease only subordinately. So does God. His aim is our profit, that is, "THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE PARTAKERS OF HIS HOLINESS:" that we might be made partakers of the Divine nature—sharers of the very holiness of God. How precious a thing must be holiness in itself, and how precious it ought to be to us, when God, who loves his people with so strong an affection, puts them to so much pain to obtain it.

And just glance at the good that afflictions are calculated to effect, and do effect in all cases where they are sanctified. As the bee sucks honey from many a bitter herb, so faith extracts good from bitter sorrows. How they crucify him to the world—and the world to him, and thus make their own cross affect them in the same way as the cross of Christ; sometimes gently drawing him away from it, at others forcing him out as by a violent wrench. How they mortify his pride and cure his vanity. How they restore him from his backslidings and bring him again to God from whom he has departed. How they

revive his lukewarm religion and quicken him in prayer. How they make him feel that religion is after all his great concern. Yes, there is more learnt sometimes in one great affliction, than from a thousand sermons, or a library of books. Who would dare to present this prayer? "Lord, let me have worldly comforts though they ruin me: and keep away affliction though it would save me." Why then should we act as we would not pray? Should we quarrel with the man who in pulling us out of the water, where, but for him, we should have been drowned, if he put a leg or an arm out of joint? And shall we murmur when God in saving us from perdition lessens our comforts? Is it not a blessed exchange to part from temporal comforts for inward holiness? Who would not be willing to have less of the world, if thereby he may have more of God? Who would not be kept poor in wealth, if he may be rich in faith? Who is the loser, if he have like Gaius, a healthy soul in a sickly body? This is the good to be gotten by afflictions, and it is the business of faith to believe the declaration that "ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD *to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose.*" While there is in the love of the world a dreadful power of turning all good things into evil, there is in the love of God as happy a principle to turn all evil things into good. This wonderful transmuting operation is ever going on in the life of a Christian, laying all under tribute, outward calamities, inward conflicts, sickness, losses, dark seasons, and mental perplexities, to promote the good of his soul—his eternal welfare. All these things are working *together* for good. Infinite wisdom and Almighty power do not work by means and agencies apart, but by their concurrence and combination. They keep in the order of co-operation which might otherwise appear a

vast confusion of things. But for the faith of this, the believer might look on the crowd and tumult of things with an utter distraction in his calculations and hopes. He beholds a thousand different things in action, each doing something, and some doing what seems to oppose others. And how can they all, so various, so different, in some respects so contrary, produce a common result. Faith is assured there is in all this a stupendous, invisible machinery, which holds them all working in connection, and reproves the unbelief which says, "This is absolutely needless," or that obstructs rather than co-operates or conduces to good.

And it also believes that God does no more than is necessary for this end. Tender is the language of the prophet, "In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind."—Isaiah xxvii, 8. Analogous to this is God's language to the Jews, "I will correct thee in measure."—Jer. xxx, 11. Hence the pleading of the prophet, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing."—Jer. x, 24. Wise physicians adapt not only the nature of the medicine to the disease, but its quantity to the strength of the patient. They administer as much as is necessary to produce the desired effect and no more. This is God's method. All the afflictions he sends are by weight and measure; as wise in their proportions as they are in their adaptations.

Faith looks for *comfort, support, and direction* during the season of trial. It expects that, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."—2 Cor. i, 5. It does not shut up the windows of the soul, and retire desponding and disconsolate to sit in darkness, because some little light within has been ex-

tinguished, but keeps them open for the glorious light of the sun to shine in and enliven the scene. It does not amidst broken cisterns, turn away from the fountain, but goes straight to the living water. It does not, like Rachel weeping for her children, "*refuse* to be comforted," but acts like a child in tears through some loss, or some insult, who runs to his mother for her sympathy and comfort, and confidently expects her sweetest, kindest words then. It saith, "Where is he that giveth songs in the night?" And then serenely expects his approach with his richest consolations. It is unbelief which says, "He has forgotten to be gracious; he has in anger shut up his bowels of compassion, and is clean gone for ever. I shall never see good."

And then the believer looks for *support* as well as consolation. He is confident in God that he will lay no more upon him than he will enable him to bear. He believes that God will sink the burden to his strength, or raise his strength to the burden: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear." —1 Cor. x, 13. "I believe that," says the Christian, "and though the load seems to increase rather than diminish, yet I take hold of God's strength, and hope to be sustained, for

' How can I sink with such a prop
As my eternal God;
Who bears the earth's huge pillars up,
And spreads the heavens abroad.'

I might as soon believe the Alps would sink under the accumulating weight of snow, as to imagine that a soul would be crushed by any weight of trouble, that leans upon Omnipotence for support. So that if I am not delivered, I shall be sustained; and sustentation is a degree and commencement of deliverance."

Direction is as necessary in many cases, as consolation and support. There are afflictions in which nothing can be done, and we seem to be commanded, like the Israelites at the Red Sea, to "stand still and see the salvation of God;" cases in which the sufferer is addressed as were the Israelites in reference to their seeking help from Egypt: "Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. Your strength is to sit still."—Isaiah xxx, 7, 15. In this case, patience and not action is called for. But there are others where something is to be done; and direction is needed from God to know what. Difficulties often add great weight to trials. The Christian sees *something* must be immediately resolved upon, but is most distressingly at a loss to know what course to pursue, and what step next to take. A wrong one may plunge him still deeper into distress, and render his case all but hopeless. He well knows that necessity is a bad oracle to consult—an evil counsellor, and what shall he do? Do? Believe the promise—"The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way."—Psalm xxv, 9. "Yea," saith God, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye."—Psalm xxxii, 8. This promise the believer turns into prayer; for which no words are so suitable for us to carry to God, as those which God has first spoken to us: "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies."—Psalm xxvii, 11.

He then looks to the *end* of afflictions. The end may sometimes come in this world. In reference to this, the utmost that the believer can be sure of is, that they will end in God's time. They may last for his whole life. The

sickness which afflicts his body may be unto death. The loss which he has sustained in his property may be irreparable, and poverty may go down with him to the grave. The trial which beclouds and distresses his spirits may be his lot for life. But on the other hand, they may not: God may be bringing him "through fire and through water to bring him out into a wealthy place." But he leaves this in the hand of God, and endeavours to maintain a hope which shall save him from despondency—checked at the same time by a fear that guards him from unwarranted confidence. It is this waiting posture, this season of suspense, during which the Christian is saying, "As soon as I shall see how it will go with me," that is the testing-time of confidence in God. Can he then keep his mind calm, hopeful, and cheerful? Can he then wait for God's deliverance without resorting to any sinful means of his own? Can he then unite patient endurance with wise and prudent activity?

But if the end should not come in this world, it will in the next; when they will not only for ever cease, but leave an eternal blessing behind. Here it is impossible to forget or omit the language of the apostle: "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—Rom. viii, 18. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—2 Cor. iv, 17. Four things are set forth in these passages. *First*, the actual termination of our afflictions. This is sweet. They are to end: they are not to last for ever: the last pang, and groan, and tear, are at hand: and how *near* the Christian never knows. *Secondly*. But they are not to end like those of the brute creation—in the grave merely, but in heaven. The last

pang, and groan, and tear, are to usher in that blessed state of which it is so beautifully said, "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—Rev. vii, 17. Heaven, and not annihilation, shall terminate the afflictions of the righteous. *Thirdly*. Heaven is so glorious that the first view of its scenes, and the first moment of its enjoyment, shall make amends for the longest life of the most complicated and intense sufferings. *Fourthly*. The sufferings of earth will enhance and increase the felicities of heaven. Oh, this wonderful opposition—this divine antithesis—this inconceivable contrast!—glory set over against affliction; weight of glory against light affliction; eternal glory against momentary affliction. In that sentence, not only brilliant with the lustre of *golden*, but radiant with the splendour of *heavenly* characters, the genius of the apostle rose to one of his highest altitudes of inspiration. At that moment, the vail that hides the holy of holies and conceals the enthroned Deity from the gaze of sense and of reason, was half-drawn aside; and in dazzling but still vague glory, the Ineffable appeared to his enraptured gaze. To that glory, the sufferings of the present time will yield their contribution. They will aid, by their previous submissive endurance, to increase the power of contrast; and they will, by the graces they call here into exercise; by the sanctification they promote; by the heavenly temper which they cultivate and cherish; be the means of ripening the spirit, and making it meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Every tear that is shed; every groan that is heaved; every loss that is sustained; every moment of suffering that is endured; every disappointment that is experienced, which is borne with patience,

with resignation, with unwearied holiness, will not only be followed with millions of ages of ineffable felicity, but will prepare the soul for its enjoyment, and add something to its weight and its lustre. To believe this, to live in hope of it, and by this hope to be sustained under present sufferings, is the work of faith.

THIRDLY. This grace has something to do with afflictions when they are past. It believes that *God* has removed them, and is grateful for the deliverance. Means and instruments may have been employed and they may have been adapted to the end. But who gave them efficacy, and rendered them successful? General laws were obeyed; but who secured the result? A deliverance from affliction loses half its sweetness when it loses in the mind of him who has experienced it all its Divine interposition. How we *ought* to dwell upon deliverance from affliction may be learnt by reading the one hundred and third and one hundred and sixteenth Psalms; and the twelfth Chapter of the Hebrews. How most men *do* conduct themselves when the affliction passes off, may be learnt from the conduct of the lepers whom Christ healed; of whom he said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?"—Luke xvii, 17, 18.

But a belief in God's omniscience as having been a witness of all the prayers, penitence, and vows uttered during the season of trial, will lead to solicitude that these should be remembered, and as to the latter, performed. Most people who have any sense of religion at all, are apt in seasons of deep trouble, especially of alarming bodily sickness, when death seems near and eternity opening, to make solemn promises and vows of amendment. But alas how few of them are of the mind of David, who makes

frequent mention of his determination to perform his vows, "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings; I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble."—Psalm lxvi, 13, 14. To forget these is a species of unbelief, for it is to act as though God had forgotten them. Usually it is better perhaps not to vow at all what we will do, but rather to pray for grace to do it. But then our prayers are as solemn in themselves nearly, and as binding as our vows. A believer therefore must be very mindful of the state of his heart while he was in trouble, and endeavour to conform to it his conduct afterwards. Jeremiah thus recollected his affliction when he said, "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me."—Lam. iii, 19, 20.

We should call past afflictions to remembrance to get the benefit of them. "Afterwards," saith the apostle, "they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." There is no doubt that in some cases they are more profitable in recollection than in endurance. The mind at the time is too much occupied and agitated by pain or tumultuous thoughts to derive all the benefit they are calculated and intended to afford. How anxiously should the recovered sufferer look out for these after-fruits of righteousness. "Affliction," says Manton, "is a tree that to the true and watchful believer bears good fruit: and we do not expect the fruit to form and ripen at once. It may be long maturing, but it will be rich and mellow when it is ripe. It frequently requires a long time before all the results of the affliction appear—as it requires months to form and ripen fruit. Like fruit, it may appear at first sour, crabbed, and unpalatable; but it

will be at last like the ruddy peach or the golden apple." An affliction sanctified is better than an affliction removed. And there is no affliction a Christian should more dread than an unsanctified one. They never leave us as they find us, but more hardened if not softened. It is fearful then to trifle either with the Word or with the judgments of the Lord, and it is difficult to say which is the more dangerous.

Faith improves past afflictions by encouraging us to trust God for future ones. This is one of the after-fruits, a serene and tranquil state of mind with regard to futurity. He who has passed through one scene of danger and escaped, and through one time of suffering and has been supported, will feel less dread in prospect of it again. Experience is not the foundation of faith, but it is one of its buttresses. David said, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." God's Word *untried* is sufficient ground of confidence; but it is an additional means of confidence, to be able to say, "Thy Word is a tried Word. *I have tried it.*" It may not be necessary for us to keep a diary in writing, but surely we ought to keep one inscribed upon the memory; that when new scenes of trial are opening before us we may look over the record and learn from the past what to expect for the future, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," is the song with which the believer should go forth to meet every fresh affliction. No, his arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear.

As one of the most beautiful testimonies to the blessed results of affliction in regard to the frame of mind it has produced, and the gratitude as well as submission with which a Christian that has been sanctified by it looks back

upon the dark scene of woe, and afterwards gathers the peaceable fruits of righteousness, I will here introduce the language of Dr. Grandpierre, of Paris, whose house had been desolated by a fever that deprived him of his wife and some of his children. Immediately after his loss he preached a series of sermons on the subject of affliction, which have been printed and translated into English, under the title of, "Sorrow and Consolation; or, the Gospel preached under the Cross. Meditations, dedicated to the Afflicted." For true pathos, and Christian sentiment, and strong consolation, I know nothing like them. Referring to his own experience, he says, "Listen, my brethren; I know a man in Christ (whose history I will not communicate) who, at a certain period of his career, by a series of important events, saw, as it were, one vast winding sheet extended over every part of his existence, enveloping the present and the future. As in the natural world, under a grey and cloudy winter sky, the weight of snow and ice pressing on it, benumbs, enchains, and seems to have annihilated all vegetation and all sap, so was his heart, his life, all within, all without him. He thought not only that all earthly joys (by which I mean those which Christianity authorises and sanctifies) were for ever lost to him, but he thought that even his faith, which, though weak, had ever been sincere, could do no more than enable him to bear without murmur the burthen of an existence, thenceforth without interest and without enjoyment. I will not enter into more minute details; for those, not altogether novices in the things that belong to the mind, enough has been said to enable them to penetrate the depths of this misery. Well, this same man can now say, not that he experiences no more sorrow, not that he has no regrets, not that he weeps no more (you would not,

you ought not, to believe him if he did;) but this he will boldly affirm, that God has so swallowed up his griefs, and tears, and heart, in the ocean of his boundless love, that he has not only resumed his interest in life, but that in some moments he asks himself if the happiness he possesses in his trial is not greater than any he has ever experienced, and if God has not blessed him more by that which he has taken away, than by that which he has given him?

“My God! I thank thee for having revealed to me the first rudiments of this science, so dark and difficult to those who have not been enlightened by thee. Instead of complaining of the stripes thou hast inflicted, I will bless thee for them. Thou hadst accorded me great blessings, Lord, before thou didst chastise me; but I acknowledge, now, that thy chastisements are, of all thy favours, the least dangerous and the most salutary. Thou art not well known but in poverty; thou art not valued, save in the destitution of all things. Thy riches, thy greatest riches, remain concealed from him who does not know the depths of his own poverty; and who can know it better than he whom thou hast deprived of all, to place him in the possession of thy riches, at the source of thy bounties? I will say, then, to the praise of thy mercy, that solitude is not only without weariness and without melancholy, but that it possesses sweet enjoyments, inexpressible delights, for the soul thou deignest to visit, with which thou condescendest to associate, and to which it pleases thee to speak of thy love, and to reveal the greatness of thy glory. I loudly proclaim, to the manifestation of thy infinite grace, that the deepest wounds the heart can receive, those which are so deep and penetrating they might be expected to bleed for ever, are so soothed by the wine and oil

poured upon them by thy Divine consolations, that, in the abundance of the blessings with which thou fillest the soul, one sometimes reproaches oneself for no longer feeling painful regrets. I will declare, with thanksgiving and songs of praise, that the horizon of life can never be so obscured, so discoloured, but that the ray of thy love can enlighten, animate, and sometimes gild and embellish it. I will declare, finally, O God of my salvation, God of my deliverance, my rock and my portion for ever, that when all other happiness fails us, that of belonging to thee, that of loving thee, of doing thy will, of devoting ourselves to thy service, that of finding all our pleasure in thee, increases so much, becomes so vast, so completely fills the capacity of the soul, that one is tempted to ask oneself, with uneasiness and culpable reproaches, if that which we possessed before, *was* happiness, true happiness, perfect happiness. Heretofore, O my God, thy place was usurped ; thou wast obliged to make it wholly void, that thou mightest fill it ! Glory be to thee, by Jesus Christ, from this time forth for ever and ever. Amen."

Faith keeps up a holy jealousy over itself, lest it should sink again into that state of lukewarmness and worldliness which would render a repetition of the visitation necessary. This is its prayer : " Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more : that which I see not, teach thou me : if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."—Job xxxiv, 31, 32. The believer realises the great fact that holiness is the end of all God's dealings with him ; that it was the design of his late affliction ; and therefore now watches, prays, and labours, that he may no more be in such a state as to require such corrective measures. The man who is just

recovered from a dangerous illness brought on by his own imprudence, and who has been told very plainly how it was incurred, and what he must do to avoid it in future, is, if he be a wise man, very attentive to the directions of his physician as to his future habits. He remembers all he suffered—all he feared—all he promised; and is concerned never to bring himself into a similar condition. So the Christian who sees that his affliction was sent in wise but severe love to heal some disorder of the soul, will remember the wormwood and the gall, and strive to keep the soul in future health, that the interposition of the Divine Physician may be no more necessary. Perhaps we could not have a more convincing evidence of sanctified affliction, or a richer benefit from our troubles, than a permanent recollection of the need of it when it came, and as permanent a solicitude to avoid the sin that made it thus necessary. The man who ten or twenty years after an affliction has passed off, looks back with adoring gratitude upon it and says,

“ Father I bless thy gentle hand ;
How kind was thy chastising rod,
That forc’d my conscience to a stand,
And brought my wandering soul to God.

“ Foolish and vain I went astray
Ere I had felt thy scourges, Lord ;
I left my guide and lost my way ;
But now I love and keep thy word.

“ I love thee, therefore, O my God :
And breathe towards thy dear abode,
Where in thy presence fully blest,
Thy chosen saints for ever rest :”

I say that he who years after the trial is over and past looks back upon it with such sentiments as these, exhibits all the proofs, and enjoys all the fruits of a sanctified affliction.

CHAPTER XII.

FAITH IN REFERENCE TO DEATH.

IF the man that trembles at death be a coward ; he that trifles with it is a fool. There is a thousand times more rationality in the former than in the latter. It has been very truly as well as impressively said, there is a phenomenon in the moral world well worthy of consideration, inquiry, and solution,—the strange and fatal insensibility of men to the grand fact that they are mortal. Since it is infallibly certain that they must and will die, and since death is so awful an event, how does it happen that so few ever seriously think of it, or really prepare for it? No doubt something may be set down to the fact, that our Creator has in his wisdom inserted in the human mind a principle counteractive in some degree to the full influence of this prospect of death : for it would seem that so grand and awful a fact in prospect, especially viewed in connection with the heaven, or hell, and eternity, that are to follow it, with the uncertainty how soon it may be realised, might operate with an influence indefinite, unlimited, and altogether overpowering, so as to arrest and suppress the whole active economy of this world. But then if this really be the case, that it is necessary for death and eternity to be thus partially counteracted in their influence, yet wholly to throw off *all* regard to them is the reproach, the madness, and the ruin of our race. Men wish to forget death—try to forget it—and ~~alas~~ succeed in accomplishing this

oblivion,* but too well. Yet we can scarcely wonder at this, when we consider what is their spiritual condition, and what death is. It is the commonness of it which deprives it of its extreme awfulness. If it happened in our world only once in a century, it would be felt like the shock of an earthquake; and would hush the inhabitants of earth into a breathless silence, while the echoes of the knell of a departed soul were reverberating round the globe. It is the moment of destiny—the seal of eternity—the cessation of probation—the commencement of retribution. The antecedents are awful—so are the accompaniments—so are the consequents. To every sense it is revolting—to every social affection crucifying—to reason perplexing—to every thing but FAITH overwhelming. This and this only can change its aspect, extract its sting, or soften its stroke: and this *can*. This is faith's last battle, and its brightest triumph. Yes, it has gone on from conquering to conquer through life, and now completes the conquest by subduing its last enemy in the dark valley of the shadow of death; and then having achieved its final victory, expires like a hero on the field of conflict and of glory. Thus ends the great fight of faith. There the shout of victory is heard from the dying believer, when he catches the strain from the lips of his Lord, and quits like him the scene of contest as a conqueror, exclaiming, "It is finished."

But we must now consider what faith has to do with death. Much, very much, it *has* to do with it.

FIRST, it receives from the Word of God the account of the true nature and cause of death. Reason here is all perplexity; philosophy is nonplussed; and science dumb-founded. They see the generations of men, like other animals, rise, flourish, and decay, and are prone to resolve all, as we have seen they do human sorrows, into the mere

operation of the fixed, unalterable laws of nature. Man was made to die: it is his nature and destiny. Such is not the view of the believer: he thinks more worthily of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator. Man was made to live. Immortality was his birthright—and had he not sinned, would have been his undisputed and undisturbed inheritance. He was placed under a law, of which the penalty was death: he broke it and he died. Death is man's own work, rather than God's. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."—Rom. v, 12. It was in the womb of sin death was conceived: and therefore the horrid monster is the offspring of its still more horrid mother. This invests it with additional terror, since the progress of natural decay is less terrific than the infliction of a sentence. Hence it is that Christians who believe this have a more awful sense of dying than the hardened sceptic, for while the latter considers it merely as the order of unintelligent nature, the former sees in it the retributions of offended justice. The tendency of atheism is to harden the heart into absolute insensibility, and to tear out from the soul all those finer and juster principles which render it susceptible to the emotions of sublimity in the contemplation of eternity. The atheist has first degraded himself in his own view of his mortality to the level of a brute, and now with almost as little emotion as his fellow-brute contemplates his approaching end. He has steeled his heart against all those feelings of awe, anxiety, and holy fear with which the believer anticipates the disclosures of eternity; and therefore, though a stranger to the consoling power of a believer's hopes, has blotted from his nature the salutary influence of a believer's fears. It is the Christian only who has a due appreciation of what it is

that makes death either terrible in one view, or joyful in another, and this makes the triumph of his faith over it the more illustrious.

He recognises the subjugation of death by the work of Christ. Among the enemies over whom Jesus triumphed openly upon the cross, was death. It was then he abolished it, and "destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is the devil; and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."—Heb. ii, 14, 15. Satan is said to have the power of death, not because he has or ever had any absolute or sovereign power over it, or authority to inflict it at his will. No: the keys of death are in the hand of Christ, and are never trusted out of them: but this power is ascribed to him because he tempted our first parents, and by his lies brought them and all their race under the law of mortality. His object was to destroy them. He was aware of the penalty with which the law of Paradise was guarded; and he imagined if he could get them to break that, it would be all over with them, and that either annihilation of the guilty pair would follow, or their eternal punishment and that of their race. But the Son of God, who was "manifested to destroy the works of the devil," frustrated this malicious design by assuming human nature; and in that nature which was capable of dying, made atonement for human guilt; and thus dissolved their obligation to suffer the punishment of eternal death, procured them acceptance with God, and a restoration from the grave by a glorious resurrection to the enjoyment of eternal life in heaven. Thus did Jesus Christ "overcome the sharpness of death, and open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Death is therefore "*abolished*,"—2 Tim. i, 10; not that it is set aside even in the case of believers—they must die as well as others; but by the

pardon of that sin which gave death its sting, the sting is plucked out, and though so dreadful in form, it is harmless in itself. Thus by the promise and prospect of eternal life, and of the resurrection of the body, the very nature of death is changed; and that which without the work of Christ would have been immense, eternal, and irreparable loss, is now infinite gain. This is the blessed truth which, upon the testimony of God in his Word, the believer receives; and thus by a faith and hope full of immortality, overcomes the last enemy.

Faith is assured of a Divine interposition as regards all the circumstances of death, as to time, place, and manner. We are informed by the Word of God that even these are all under the appointment or permission and wise direction of God's over-ruling Providence. There is chance in *nothing* that concerns us or happens to us during our pilgrimage upon earth. How much less in that event which closes life. Even a sparrow falleth not to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father. How much less an immortal man. The hour of each man's death is as certainly fixed as the day of judgment. God as much concerns himself about each one, as if there were *only* one to be the object of his care. It is true that to all appearance the death of man is as casual or undetermined as the fall of the autumnal leaf in the pathless forest; but it is not so. There is *a time to die*—a fixed time—an unalterable time, and each man is immortal till his time comes. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?"—Job vii, 1. "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."—Job xiv, 5. This fact is declared not to make us indolent or rashly adventurous;

not to take us off from all the proper means for preserving life; but to deliver us from all undue solicitude about death. How soothing is the idea that infinite wisdom has fixed the time, and which must be the best time. How calmly yet how confidently may we go forward amidst the dangers and difficulties of our present situation, remembering there is one who has fixed the hour of our departure, whose eye is ever on his own Divine time-piece, waiting and watching for the moment he himself has fixed to arrive, and extending his arm over us to guard us till then. What power can crush us till he gives the signal? and what skill can preserve us when he determines our decease? who should fear he shall die before God calls him to depart? Who would wish to live one moment longer than God sees fit to continue him? Many have been comforted by this even amidst the carnage and slaughter of the battle-field. "Every bullet has its commission," they have exclaimed, "and I am invulnerable to them all till God sends one to strike me." So in the time of pestilence, the same faith has said to its possessor,

"Go, and return, secure from death,
Till God shall call thee home."

As with the *time* so with the *place*—that too is fixed, whether at home or abroad; on the railway, at sea, or in the chamber. So also the *manner*, whether sudden or slowly; whether by accident or disease. All is of God—all in the plan of Providence. Oh most consoling thought! There is an infinite mind that with marvellous condescension has arranged all these matters for us beforehand. Omniscient wisdom, at the impulse of infinite love, has laid down for itself the plan of mercy, and will suffer nothing to counteract its working. Scoffing scepticism

and proud philosophy may laugh at the idea of the Infinite God descending to such trifles ; but it is for the glory of his love to be willing to do it, and equally for the glory of his wisdom and power to be able to do it. What a view does it give us of his greatness, to think of him as creating a world, and also appointing the time, the place, and the manner in which each individual shall die. There are some who are ever speculating, fearing, or hoping about the circumstances of their death. One dreads this kind of death, and another dreads that. One deprecates a sudden death, and another a slow one. Faith leaves it all to God, and submits to his wisdom the appointment of the death by which we shall most glorify God.

Then, this great principle delivers the believer from the immoderate *fear* of death. This was one end of the Saviour's death, "To deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."—Heb. ii, 15. The reference here is to the Jews, who, in consequence of the comparatively dim light which in their case was shed upon the subject of immortality, were in great and constant dread of dissolution.

Our situation is far and delightfully different from theirs. Through the rent veil we see more clearly into the holy of holies, and thus learn to rise above that excessive fear of death which characterised these ancient believers. True it is there is a natural fear of death common to humanity, and which is necessary to self-preservation ; for who would care to perpetuate that existence which had nothing to render it desirable except existence itself ? How many would throw off life as an intolerable burden, but for the inherent dread of its termination by death. This natural dread of dissolution is in some cases much increased by a constitutional and somewhat morbid tendency to look at

every thing through a darkened medium ; to anticipate imaginary evils ; and to magnify such as are real. In very many cases however, we may perhaps say in most, the fear of death arises from the low state of religion and the weakness of faith. Were the mind of the Christian more employed in the contemplation of celestial objects ; did he habituate himself to meditate upon the partially revealed glory ; did he oftener rise above the world to the mount of Pisgah, and look by faith over the promised land ; did he possess more of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ; did he instead of limiting his view to the dark boundary line of the grave, cast his eye over into the realms of light, and life, and immortality, how would his fears of the dying hour abate. It is remarkable how little the writers of the New Testament say about death compared with what they do about heavenly glory. It would seem as if they scarcely saw it, and as if it were lost amidst the blaze of the celestial splendour, and appeared only like a dark spot floating upon the disc of the heavenly luminary. A more familiar acquaintance by the power of faith with the many mansions in his Father's house which the Saviour is gone to prepare, would raise us above the dread of the dark avenue that leads to them.

As the fear of death in many, perhaps in most cases, arises from the love of life, the best way to destroy the effect is of course to remove the cause. The immoderate dread of quitting the world is the dark shadow passing over the soul of the immoderate *love* of the world. We dread extremely to part from a beloved object. And what then is this world that we should be so unwilling to leave it ? It is as regards its natural scenery, a beautiful world. But is it not under a curse withal for man's sin ? Do we

not see *some* proofs everywhere that sin, the mighty spoiler, has been there, and left his dirty foot-prints behind? Is it because of the pleasures of sense and appetite you are unwilling to depart? What! Is there any thing in having the flesh indulged and pleased—the sense gratified—the fancy amused, so important as to be reluctant to give it up? What so great, so good, so worthy of an immortal spirit, can you find in meats, drinks, and dress, in full barns and coffers, in vulgar fame and applause, that should make these things so attractive? Are you desirous to live for *these* things? Is it not a low and worthless spirit that had rather be so employed than see your Maker's face; that chooses thus to entertain itself on earth rather than partake of the effusions of divine glory above; that had rather creep with worms than soar with angels; associate with the brutes than with the spirits of just men made perfect?

Then think of all the pains of body to be endured in the world, which so often make us groan in this tabernacle, being burdened. Is it to drag about that poor, infirm, and diseased body you would remain—that hospital of disease—and thus hold fellowship with all the ills that flesh is heir to? Or if you have bodily health, what fears, cares, anxieties, oppress the mind. Are there not thoughts continually disturbing us, which leave a deeper sting than even disease? What bitter disappointments, what corroding solitudes, what aching hearts, what gloomy forebodings, enter into our mental history. Is it this we so love that we are unwilling to lay down the load? “Ah, but our friends.” Well, are these all, and always to us what we could wish or desire? Is there no frustration of hope from that quarter? No ingratitude, inconstancy, unkindness, sharper than a serpent's tooth, from them? How rare is a perfect

friendship and an unmixed affection. Your possessions perhaps draw your hearts to earth; you do not like to part with houses, lands, money. Poor, sordid, terrene soul, to find more on earth to attract, than there is in heaven!

But look at the world in another aspect—as the scene of man's apostacy—the region of sin—the territory of Satan, or at least that which he claims as the god of this world. Are you a Christian, then you must be aware of the contractedness of your knowledge—the darkness of your minds—your feeble, uninfluential apprehensions of spiritual and eternal things—your incoherent, shattered thoughts of Divine truth. You must know how imperfect is your sanctification—how strong your corruptions—how slow your mortification—how ineffectual your resistance of temptation. You cannot be ignorant of the sorrow, the complaint, the dejection, the doubts, the fears, and all-but despondency, which these things occasion. Are there not times when the apostle's language seems to suit *us*, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death." Is *this* a state from which we should be unwilling to go away? And then extending our views beyond ourselves to the world around us, do we not see on every hand the reign of sorrow as the result of the reign of sin? What tears flow in our path, what groans enter into our ears. What a mass of misery do we behold beyond our power to relieve it. How often do we feel a wish we could go somewhere to escape the sights and sounds of wretchedness which infest our path, and which by sympathy entail misery upon ourselves. What, reluctant to leave this, and go where all tears are wiped from our eyes? Nor is it the *sorrows* of humanity only, nor chiefly those, that afflict the Christian, but its *sins*. O the aboundings of iniquity—the overflowings of ungodliness

—the infidelity, immorality, heresy, and Popery, which are to be found here; and the idolatry and Mahomedanism abroad! O the sight of a world where Satan reigns and sin covers the earth; where tyranny, slavery, oppression, and injustice trample upon the rights of humanity, and man becomes a wild beast—a fiend to man! How can we love such a world, polluted as it is by crime, vocal by misery, stained with the blood of millions of martyrs; which is the walk of devils; the slaughter-house of the saints; the scene of ruin to countless hosts of immortal souls; the spot where Christ was murdered; and where God is perpetually insulted? What a reproach is it to our love to God—to holiness—to heaven, that we should be unwilling to die and depart from such a scene as this.

And what do we mean by this unwillingness to die? Is it that we are not willing to die *now*, or not at all? Is it the thing itself, or only the time of it? If merely the time, you may be sure that you will be just as unwilling at some future time as now. When would you die? How long would you live? Be assured that the longer you live, the more earthly you will grow in such a frame as this. So that it is evident it is the thing itself, and *not* the time you dislike, and would put off. You reverse Job's expression, and say of death what he did of life, "I loathe it and *would* live always." What! wish ever to be kept out of heaven! Wish to be eternally united to a clod of earth! Wish to subvert the laws of nature and overturn the constitutions of heaven, to let you remain perpetually upon earth! Live for ever away from your Father in heaven, and an exile upon earth from his home above! Can this comport with a supreme love to God and a conversation in heaven?*

* See the last chapter of that glorious Treatise, "Howe's Blessedness of the Righteous."

Subdue then your love of life by a frequent meditation on these things. As Johnson said to Garrick, when the latter was displaying his beautiful house and gardens to him at Hampton Court, "Ah David, these are the things that make a death-bed terrible." Conquer the love of the world by looking not at its beauties, but at its deformities : not by dwelling on its comforts, but on its crimes ; not by perpetually taking your fill of enjoyment at its purest spring, but by tasting its bitter waters. It is your love of life that makes you unwilling to die. Wean yourself from it. Die daily, as the apostle did, by anticipation, and the dread reality will not, when it comes, terrify you. Familiarise yourself with the shape, mien, and step of the monster, and it will soon cease to be monstrous. Turn not away from death with horror and affright, as children and timid women do from some supposed spectral forms ; but look it in the face, examine it, and you will cease to dread it. We ought not to acquire an infidel indifference or a paganish stupidity, or a brutal insensibility—such a hardness of heart as leads by a loss of all sense of the value of life, to an utter recklessness about death. We desire no such frame as this, but a state of mind in which a deep and somewhat awful sense of the solemnity of dying is moderated by a hope full of immortality. The true frame of mind is, an entire willingness to die or live as God shall see fit, accompanied with a leaning, so far as we ourselves are concerned, towards death. Not however in order to get rid of trouble, or find in the grave a sanctuary for sorrow, but from a desire to be with Christ and to attain to the perfection of our nature.

Still we concede that there is a natural fear of death, which even faith does not totally subdue and eradicate. Mr. Jay beautifully compares it, as I have elsewhere ob-

served, to the dread of the sea, which a person may feel who is separated from his family by the ocean. He longs to be with them, but still he is afraid to cross the great boisterous gulf which is betwixt them. A believer loves his Saviour, and thinks with delight of being for ever with him; but he must die to reach him, and he does still think with some degree of dismay of the dark valley through which he must pass to reach him. It is sometimes a trouble, at any rate a solicitude to him, to consider how he shall conduct himself in that awful hour of conflict with his last enemy. Often he turns an anxious eye to that scene when he shall feel himself, and be seen by others, confronted by the King of Terrors, and in earnestness and trembling, not however unmixed with faith and hope, he prays,

“When I tread the verge of Jordan
Bid my anxious fears subside.”

And generally the prayer is answered.

It is the part of faith now, to expect God's promise to be fulfilled, and his presence to be granted in that awful hour. This is its language, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” *

* This passage from the twenty-third Psalm, though quoted above, according to the usual meaning attached to it, does not really refer to death. A reflecting reader will observe that David does not speak of the valley of *death*, but only the valley of the *shadow* of death. The reference is to danger, exigency, and trouble, so great as to be the very shadow of death itself. The expression is to be interpreted by the subject of which it is a part. In continuance of the beautiful pastoral idea of the Psalm, David intended to say, that as a sheep when it wanders through deep ravines and dark valleys, is secured by the presence of its shepherd with his rod and staff against the assaults of wild beasts and other dangers, so he, as often as he was in a situation of danger, had a sufficient protection in the shepherd care of God.

There is also another passage, in Psalm cxvi, which by ordinary readers

Even the timid believer may and should believe in Christ *for* his death. I say he may, for Christ has promised to come and meet him. "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself."—John xiv, 1-3. Wonderful language! Mysterious condescension! He is like one friend saying to another upon the road, "I will go and get all ready for your reception: and when all is complete, I will come and meet you and introduce you." Will not this dismiss your fears? What need you fear if Jesus be with you? And he has promised it. Why, his glory will throw a radiance over the dark form of death itself; and in his presence the last enemy will be transformed into an angel of light. I am persuaded from long observation, that there is nothing about which the true Christian has less need to be anxious than his dying hour. If his God has promised to make his bed in his sickness, how much more will he make his bed for his death.

SECONDLY. There is also faith *in* death, as well as faith *for* it, and before it comes.

It is said of the patriarchs by the apostle, "*These all died in faith:*" an expression which in their case had reference to their belief in God's promise of the land of Canaan which they were assured would be inherited by their descend-

is misapplied. It is there said, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." This is usually understood to mean that the Lord is especially present to his dying saints, and causes his consolations peculiarly to abound at that season of their trial. But the true meaning, as the context and tenor of the whole Psalm proves, is that the Lord watches over the lives of his saints, and guards them from death. David had experienced this in a dangerous disease by which he had been brought nigh to death, but from which he had been delivered by God's providence, and it was to celebrate this deliverance this Psalm was written. It is of rescue *from* death, and not of consolation in it, that he speaks.

ants, though they themselves possessed not a foot of it. But their belief was not of this merely, for it is said they “desired a better country, that is a heavenly ;” and in the expectation of this they met the last enemy. Nor is it their privilege only, thus to pass through the dark portals of the tomb, but also of all true believers.

Faith brings the believer into a certain state—an habitual and permanent condition. It changes his relations, and from an enemy and a criminal makes him a friend, yea, a child ; thus introducing him into a state of reconciliation and adoption. He is accepted of God into a lasting relationship, which follows him through life, death, and eternity. So that he does not depend for his safety upon the actual exercise of faith in the hour and article of his departure. He may die by accident, and have no opportunity for a single mental exercise : or he may be suddenly smitten down by apoplexy, or some other disease which extinguishes life in a moment ; or his sun may set with his intellect under a cloud of morbid melancholy, like the poet Cowper. But he is still in a *state* of faith, and is as safe as though he died in the very triumph of actual faith. Yea, there have been instances in which Christians of undoubted piety have died by their own hands in a fit of insanity. These also were in a state of faith, though from a disordered brain, they were unable to exercise it. The luminary was there, but it underwent a total eclipse. Hence the necessity of coming into this state in health, by a cordial reception of the Gospel, and an entire change of heart through the power of the Spirit of God. But dying in faith means also, in the case of those who are of sound mind and have the unfettered use of their intellectual powers, the actual exercise of belief in God’s truth at the time—a continuance to the end, according to the

words of the apostle: "We are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."—Heb. iii, 4. "We are not of them who draw back to perdition; but of them who believe to the saving of the soul."—Heb. x, 39. They are faithful *unto* death; and then are believing *in* death. Blessed is the privilege of believing *then*. Never do we more need it than in this great conflict with our last enemy. Then, when heart-strings are breaking, and friends weeping, and the world receding, and eternity opening, what can be of the smallest service to us but this? We are literally *shut up to faith*. And what we need is generally granted. They who went all their days feeble and desponding are often mighty then. It is wonderful and delightful to see how God strengthens the confidence of his doubting children, when he is about to remove them to himself. Their faith, which had been only as a spark amidst much smoke of gloom, doubts, and fears, blazes out then into a bright and cloudless flame. God seems to have reserved some of his richest cordials of assurance till that season; and they who went mourning here below, and often wet their couch with tears, have departed, like the fabled swan, with a song of soft and heavenly music. What scenes, transcending all that poetry describes or fiction imagines, are to be witnessed in the chambers of dying saints. How often nas it seemed as if the veil were drawn aside and the scenes of the celestial world were actually visible to the eye of sense; so that some have gone so far as to suppose it possible that visions of the heavenly state *have* been granted to those who at the time were treading upon its threshold. We should rather conclude, however, that these are only the realizing apprehensions of that faith which then beyond what it ever did before, penetrates the

veil of mortality, and roams abroad amidst the realms of celestial glory. But *how* precisely does the faith of the dying Christian exercise itself then? By as simple a reliance as ever on Christ for salvation: and never is the reliance of the Christian *more* simple than in that moment when the soul is about to appear in the presence of a holy God. Then the mind looking back upon the past is more deeply sensible than ever of its sins, corruptions, and imperfections. Instead of feeling any disposition to depend with pride or complacency upon the longest life and the greatest measure of service, it never renounced all confidence of this kind with such emphatic detestation as it now does. The last lingering remain of self-righteousness then departs, and the believer with a new depth of humility exclaims,

“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
When I draw my fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
When I stand before thy throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

Belief exercises itself in death by expecting, according to his promise, the presence of our Divine Lord. “Has he not,” says the Christian, “engaged to be with me? Is he not with me? Do I not feel him near? What means this holy calm which has stolen into my breast? How is it I am so peaceful, when I feared once I should be so anxious and agitated? Is it not the presence of my Lord? Can I doubt that he is upholding me? Was I not always tremulous, timid, and doubting? and lo! now I am serene, hopeful, and even cheerful! I am in the gloomy pass,

and yet it is not dark. Surely Jesus is near, and it must be the light of his countenance which irradiates the scene."

The believer resigns his soul into the hands of Christ for the hour of departure—for the awful transition—for the passage to eternity. The death of the godly is not a mere passive state of mind, but an active one. They do not die violently as it were, or by force of a mere necessity. Beasts when *they* die, yield to force; and so do wicked men who are "driven away in their wickedness,"—torn out of life by a wrench: but it is not so with the Christian, when his faith is truly in exercise. He may, as we have considered, have some natural fear of death; yet when he sees it is the will of God he should depart, even this yields, and he resigns himself up to the Divine command. He dismisses himself. In what soft terms does the Scripture speak of the death of saints: it is a dissolution, not a violent tearing to pieces.—Phil. i, 23. "Having a desire to depart (to be dissolved) and to be with Christ." It is a sleep. "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."—1 Thess. iv, 14. So that dying is to a Christian, settling himself to sleep—a sweet and gentle action, as well as passively yielding himself up to this gracious and unresisted as well as irresistible power. Hence the primitive Christians called their grave-yards the *koimeterion*, or sleeping-place; a Greek term from which our English word "cemetery" is derived. "Into thy hands, O Jesus, I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me." This is the language of the dying believer. He is about to make *the plunge into the abyss of eternity*; and he *can* do it, for he confides his soul to him who has invited, encouraged, and even commanded him to make the deposit. He does not stand lingering and shivering on the brink, and trembling to lose his hold; but launches into the deep with a confidence of safety.

His soul is sustained by a hope full of immortality. The pulse of life is feeble and fluttering, and each stroke of the heart seems as if it would be the last ; but the expectation of eternal life becomes each moment stronger as the soul draws nearer and nearer to the region in which there is no more death. Through the dark vista which intervenes he sees the lights in his Father's house, and they are close at hand ; the beams of which are beautifully reflected from the dark waters of Jordan's intervening stream. It is now all reality. "I know," he says, "that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, I have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Mortality will soon be swallowed up of life."

Nor are the interests of the poor frail body left out from the meditation of the dying Christian. There is a testimony from God in the Bible concerning these ; revelation has broken the silence and irradiated the shades of the sepulchre, by the doctrine of the resurrection. It has left us in no doubt concerning the future history of the meaner and mortal part of our nature. The secrets of the grave are divulged. The body, whatever mystery envelopes the subject of its identity, shall be raised. Such is the hope of him who has learnt his religion from the Bible. Many a dreary hour of sickness and pain, which occurs during the wearisome nights of sickness and months of vanity which are appointed to him, is rendered tolerable, if not comfortable, by the words of the apostle, "From whence we look for the coming of the Saviour, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Phil. iii. 21. With this hope he watches the progress of disease ; feels his attenuated frame growing weaker and weaker ; endures

racking pain; is conscious oftentimes of much that is loathsome and annoying to others, till at length he longs to throw off the burden of the flesh, exulting in the words of Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."—Job. xix, 25, 26. And cheering his heart with the beautiful assurance of that wonderful chapter which shall be read at his funeral, and with which he often anticipates his own obsequies: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body:"—1 Cor. xv, 42-44, "Take thy victim, O death!" he exclaims, "I calmly and willingly surrender this poor, diseased, emaciated body to thy arrest. But rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; for though I fall, I shall arise."

"Corruption, earth, and worms,
Shall but refine this flesh,
Till my triumphant spirit comes,
To put it on afresh.

"God my Redeemer lives,
And often from the skies
Looks down and watches all my dust.
Till he shall bid it rise."

Faith's work in death is not yet complete, for it is exercised in reference to those that are to survive. The dying husband and father feels that much of the bitterness of death consists in separation from those loved ones who stand weeping around his bed, especially when leaving them with slender or no provision for their support. "I die, but God liveth," he says to them. "I am departing from you, but he remains with you. I have now

nothing to comfort myself with, nor to comfort you, but his promises ; and has he not said, ‘ A Judge of the fatherless and widows is God in his holy habitation ? ’—Psalm lxviii, 5. ‘ Leave thy fatherless children with me, and let thy widows trust in God. ’—Jer. xlix, 11. I believe him, and can trust you to his providential care, and covenant engagements. I have nothing to leave you but his promise, and with that I can leave you in hope and in comfort. I can do nothing for you any longer but pray for you and believe for you ; and having done this, painful as it is for me to be separated from you, I go to my grave with confidence for you and in peace for myself.” What an exercise of faith does it sometimes require in the *mother*, who is leaving, and perhaps in perilous circumstances, a large family, and of course unable even to imagine into whose hands they may fall, when her successor shall be chosen, to believe that somehow or other they will be taken care of. And oh ! the still stronger confidence in God needed by the widow on her decease, to cherish a hope that her orphan family will find friends ; and to believe that when father and mother have forsaken them, the Lord *will* take them up. The dying pastor also, who during his decline was so anxious and sometimes so distrustful concerning his church, loses now his fears and his solicitude, and cherishes the faith and the feelings of the celebrated Dr. Owen, who on his death-bed said, “ I am leaving the ship of the church in a storm, but what is the loss of a poor under-rower, while the Divine Pilot is himself on board.” This *is* faith, truly as well as nominally, and comfortably as well as truly, to commit these objects of our affection into the hands of God with a cheerful expectation that he will take care of them.

Such then is the exercise of this grace in reference to death.

We cannot reach heaven unless we persevere in our belief of God's truth to the end of life. It becomes us for our caution to ponder the words of the prophet: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned."—Ezek. xviii, 24. And it is well at the same time to remember for our comfort the declaration of the apostle, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."—Phil. i, 6. And it is only amidst the salutary fear and trembling produced by the former passage, that the comfort of the latter can be, or ought to be enjoyed. Perseverance to the end is matter of God's promise, and therefore should be matter of man's belief: but then if perseverance be the end—holy fear, care, and watchfulness are the means. As Elisha would not leave his master till he was taken up into heaven; so faith must not, will not leave us, till our ascension comes. We see many, who appeared to have true religion in life, losing it by the way, and coming to death without it. Past experience in life, when it is lost, will not do to rest upon in death. We cannot die in safety, if we do not die as well as live in the belief of God's Word.

While they who live in faith should also seek to die in faith; they who would die in faith must live in faith. So did the patriarchs, and so must we. Men generally die as they live. We had need make trial of the faith we would die by. It is the most perilous thing in the world to trust for our religion to the last hours of life. Death-bed repentances are little to be depended upon. The Scripture contains the history of four thousand years, and

there is but one instance—the thief on the cross—of a sinner's being a true penitent in death. And there were special reasons for that. It was the first-fruits of Christ's death and merits, and at the time when the great oblation was made. It was the first proof of the magnetic power of the cross. No such season ever did occur, or ever can again; therefore no encouragement can be derived from it for any other case—for Christ was then performing his great redeeming work, and it seemed meet it should be signalised by some extraordinary act of grace. Surely we should not have our weapons, or the way to use them, to obtain, when we are in front of the foe, and need them for use.

And even professing Christians should be much concerned to provide a dying faith for a dying hour. Dr. Manton has well said, in the quaint language of his day, "We had need to get promises ready, evidences ready, and experiences ready, against a dying hour." By which he meant, that in life we should be intelligently, habitually, and felicitously acquainted with our Bibles; that we should read much, meditate much, and apply much, the promises of Scripture; that there should be especially a very intimate acquaintance with those parts of Scripture which relate to death and heaven. This is getting *promises* ready. As to *evidences*, he meant that there should be all those states of mind and habits of life in holy walking, spiritual affections, and the work of the Spirit, which are the fruits of faith and the proofs of its existence, and which are so necessary in a dying hour to assure us that all is right. It is a fearful thing to come to a death-bed, as many do, with a religion so feeble as to leave the poor trembling soul in dreadful doubt as to its state. And then *experiences* mean, that habitual living upon the power, wisdom, faith-

fulness, and love of God, which shall enable us not only to rely upon him with peace and comfort in our last and closing scene, but shall also help us to bear testimony to others of his glorious perfections and covenant mercies. How encouraging is it to survivors to *hear* such testimony, —how comforting to the dying saint to bear it. How many have become preachers in death, who never aspired to the office in life—whose death-bed became a pulpit, and their dying experience more powerful than the most impressive eloquence. Then let us get promises ready, evidences ready, and experiences ready, for a dying hour. We should have many more beautiful instances of faith in death, had we more instances of strong and influential faith in life.

CHAPTER XIII.

FAITH IN ITS RELATION TO HEAVEN.

THERE are three questions which every considerate man will propose to himself in reference to his *present* state of being. What am I? Whence did I come? What is my business here? And there are three more which he cannot help sometimes asking concerning the future. Where? what? how? shall I be when I go hence? There, before us, at no great distance, is the grave, into the awful and mysterious obscurity of which, neither sense nor reason can dart one illuminating ray; nor can either of them extort from its sullen silence one whisper of information. Oh, that dreadful future! Into what will that one first step from the stage of existence plunge us? To reason, it is an unbounded, unvaried, starless, midnight darkness, without one luminous point through infinite space. WHAT SHALL WE BE? How soon is it spoken! But who shall reply? Think how profoundly this question, this mystery, concerns us—and in comparison with this, what are to us all questions of all sciences? What to us all researches into the constitution and laws of material nature? What all investigation into the history of past ages? What to us the future career of events in the progress of states and empires? What to us, what shall become of this globe itself, or all the mundane system? What, where, shall WE be ourselves? is the matter of surpassing, infinite interest. There is in the contemplation a magnitude, a

solemnity, which transcends and overwhelms our utmost faculty of thought.

But where shall we gain information about this mysterious future? All men, except a few tribes of the lowest savages, have *desired* immortality. Man is in existence, loves life, and covets it for ever; he cannot endure the thought of throwing it off, and wants to know whether he shall die out at last, or live for ever. He is a creature capable of happiness or misery, and tastes much of each on earth, and is anxious to know which, or whether either, will be his lot beyond the grave. He is conscious of sin, and feels solicitous to be informed whether the consequences of transgression will pursue him into an invisible state. He is capable of indefinite growth in intelligence, virtue, bliss; and he would be informed if he is to be cut off in the infancy of his being, his faculties, and his acquisitions, or is to enter upon an endless career of improvement. How is he to be satisfied on these momentous points? The world by wisdom knew not God—nor immortality—nor heaven. Reason, we repeat, never did, never can, assure us that there *is* a future state at all. If it could ascertain this, it could not tell us whether it is a limited or an endless duration. If *this* could be proved, and it were certain that there is to be everlasting consciousness, it would be at a loss to tell us whether it were a state of unmixed bliss, or misery, or a mixture of both. This ascertained, it would still be unable to inform us how felicity is to be obtained, and misery avoided, through our eternity of being. And even if all this were demonstrated, it could not tell us whether immortality were a gift bestowed on the nobler spirits of our race, or were the common endowment of humanity. It fails at every step. Neither Plato, Cicero, Socrates, nor Aristotle, could settle

these questions. The sages, after uttering their speculations and their hopes, followed them with their gloomy doubts and fearful misgivings. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." The whole heathen world "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now:" longing for an immortality to relieve them from the burden of their sufferings, their cares, and their labours. There is a beautiful fact recorded by the Venerable Bede in his history, which is much in point. When Edwin, the Saxon monarch, embraced Christianity, he convoked the heads of the nation and laid before the assembly the motive of his change of religion, and asked them what they thought of this, to them, new doctrine. After others had given their opinion, a chief of the warriors rose and spoke in these terms:

"Thou mayest recollect, O king, a thing which sometimes happens in the days of winter, when thou art seated at the table, with thy captains and thy men-at-arms, when a good fire is blazing, when it is warm in thy hall, but rain, snow, and storms are without. Then comes a little bird and darts across the hall, flying in at one door and out at the other. The instant of this transit is sweet to him, for then he feels neither rain nor hurricane. But that instant is short; the bird is gone in the twinkling of an eye; and from winter he passes forth to the winter again. Such to me seems the life of man on this earth; such is the momentary course compared with the length of time that precedes and follows it. That eternity is dark and comfortless to us; tormenting us by the impossibility of comprehending it. If then this new doctrine can teach us anything respecting it, it is fit that we should follow it."

Such was the beautiful and picturesque confession of

Paganism through the lips of this aged warrior, and hitherto its devoted votary. Yes, the soul of man, apart from the discovery made to us by the revelation of God, like this little bird, seems to flit from darkness across the abodes of the living in this world into darkness again, and to wander, nobody knows where, without shelter, in the regions of wintry storms, snows, and hurricanes.

What oracle then is to settle this tremendous question, and to tell us what we shall be, where, and how, when we go hence? What is to relieve the conscious heart, brooding in awful silence over the darkness of the sepulchre? Harken to the music—the heavenly music of those thrilling words, “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath ABOLISHED DEATH, AND HATH BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT THROUGH THE GOSPEL.”—2 Tim i, 10. What are all the volumes which philosophy ever wrote, compared for value to these few golden sentences. By the cross of Christ, the dark screen that intercepted our view, and hid the realms of glory from our sight, is rent asunder, and the vista of heaven and eternal ages is laid open to the eye of faith. Immortality, seen only as a dim object of *hope*, amidst the midnight darkness of Paganism, and only as a dim object of *faith* amidst the twilight of Judaism, is beheld amidst the noontide splendour of Christianity in its magnitude and grandeur, as at once the object of a strong and steady faith and a lively and a saving hope.

The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and a future state of rewards and punishment beyond the grave, all are matters of pure revelation. We do not say there are no presumptive evidences, or rather we should say, suggestions of these things, apart from revelation: but they are *only* suggestions, which never did, and never

could satisfy any anxious mind. Immortality itself is so vast, so wondrous a thing, as to seem applicable, when we come to reflect upon it, only to the Great Eternal himself. To conceive that I, or any human being, born after the manner of the brute creation; and like them sustained by the earth; a poor, frail, feeble creature of yesterday, and crushed before the moth—who, after a few fleeting years at most, shall return to the earth from which I sprang, and seem to be utterly blotted out from existence—shall continue to be in some mode, and in some scene of existence, for millions of ages, and that *these* will be as nothing in comparison with what will yet follow! That a duration, passing away beyond all reach of the stupendous power of numbers, will be as nothing! and that it will still be myself, the very same being! And that it will be a perfectly specific manner of being—with a full consciousness of what it is—an internal world of thought and emotion—a perfect sense of relations to the system in which I shall find myself placed:—and this a continual succession of distinct sentiments and experiences, and with the constant certainty of the train going on *for ever*. How utterly surpassing all this to reason, and almost incredible to faith, when it contrasts this wondrous—all but deified man—with the present little, insignificant, momentary creature, who flutters out his tiny being in this material, and as compared with the universe, little world.

Yes, and this immortality too, the attribute, the destiny, the portion of all that swarm of ignorant, debased, and to appearance utterly insignificant, useless creatures, which people a large portion of our earth. Could anything short of a Divine revelation establish such a fact? Could any thing short of God's testimony lead me to embrace it? Not that there is anything in it contrary to reason—no—

but something so vast—so wondrous—so magnificent, that reason never could have concluded that this gift, so rich, so splendid, so extraordinary, *could* be bestowed on the child of dust, the heir of mortality. And does not even faith, I say again, sometimes recoil from it as a huge improbability? Nothing short of all those irrefutable evidences which accredit the mission of the Son of God, could ever make me believe that I am the wondrous being which immortality makes me. To believe this in reality—this is faith—*strong* faith—*mighty* faith.

The great mass even in this Christian land, and also among those who frequent our sanctuaries, do not believe it. Their conduct is utterly at variance with such a belief. Is the impress of immortality upon their character? Is there any thing that bears resemblance to the mighty idea in their conduct? Are they not infinitely more swayed by the present time, than a future eternity? Has not earth infinitely greater attractions for them than heaven? Is not all their labour bestowed upon the present, while the endless future is neglected and forgotten? No, no. Immortality is not believed by the multitude. It is a mere name, an opinion, a speculation; any thing but a deep practical conviction.

Still God has testified it. There, in characters radiant with the light of heaven,—there, written as with the beams of the Sun of Righteousness upon the page of inspiration, is the mighty word, IMMORTALITY,—the gift of God—the hope of a dying world—the portion of the righteous. The mind even of the omniscient God himself never conceived anything greater; nor his words, which are not as our words, ever expressed anything nobler than that matchless sentence, “*To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, immortality—*

eternal life." O, most precious volume, if only for this one verse! I can never come to it without stopping to gaze, to wonder, and adore. Glory!—honour!—immortality!—eternal life! What subjects of thought! compared with their brightness the sun at noon is dark; with their grandeur, the ocean is insignificant; with their beauty, the choicest scenes of nature are dull. How have heroes panted for glory; the ambitious for honour; the living for immortality; and the dying for life! Here are all these in their significance, divested of the shadow and the sham with which pretence and illusion have invested them; in their purity, divested of every thing that ignorance and falsehood have attached to them; in their perfection, comprehending all that in the Word of God belongs to them. Philosophers, orators, poets, historians, I say to you all, find me if you can—quote for me if it be possible—from the whole range of human literature, a sentence so weighty in terms, so lofty in subject, so worthy of God to utter or man to hear, as this which fell from the pen of the blessed apostle. It would seem as if, when he wrote that wonderful sentence, he had in view the whole race of aspirants after what is illustrious; the multitude of every age and every country who have lifted their heads above their fellows; and looking round with exploring eye, have sought to find some adequate and permanent good for the soul; as if he saw their eager hope, their laborious pursuit, their panting bosoms, after what they *thought* to be glory, honour, and immortality; and knowing how they were deceived, said to them, "Here it is—revealed by the gospel, and proposed to all who live according to its precepts."

But it is time, after this long introduction, to dwell upon the subject of this chapter, which is, *Faith in reference to heaven*. It believes too in hell. Yes: it credits all those

dark threatenings—those terrific descriptions of punishment that will come upon the wicked. It stands sometimes—not that it loves to do so, but because God requires it—upon the borders of the flaming pit, to hear the groans of the lost, and see the smoke of their torment ascend up for ever and ever. Perfect love casteth out a servile, but not a filial fear. There *are* seasons when a contemplation even of the place of punishment may be salutary even to a child of God. Hope and fear are the two scales in the soul of the Christian which regulate each other—as one sinks, the other rises: and faith holds and adjusts the balance. And it is well that if we sink into a frame where the objects which appeal to our hope are but feebly influential, we should be roused by those addressing themselves to our fears. The awe produced on the soul of the believer by the representation of the miseries of the lost, is salutary and even necessary. And it has been conjectured by some, that as the continued and certain security of saints in glory will be effected by moral means, the contemplation of divine justice as it appears in the eternal punishment of the wicked, will be among those things which will accomplish the eternal conservation of the righteous in heaven. But we have now to do with heaven: and the following are the exercises of the believer's mind in reference to it.

1. He credits its *certainty*. It is an assured fact that there is a heaven—a state of ineffable bliss, beyond the grave, for the righteous. He holds it not as a mere opinion—a speculation—a something that reason renders probable, but believes it as that which revelation makes certain. It is one of the chief subjects of the New Testament. Though of necessity invisible, it is in his view a grand reality. True he has sometimes his gloomy seasons, when

the world unseen, unknown, appears to him a world uncertain: Doubts, fears, difficulties, and objections rise up before him, or are injected into his mind like so many fiery darts of the wicked one. Distressing at times are these conflicts between his reason and his faith—bitter his feelings—agonising his state. This is what Bunyan calls the *Dark Valley of the Shadow of Death*. It is however only for awhile. He takes up the shield of faith, and upon this receives the burning missiles and quenches them all. He lays hold of the Word of God, recovers his confidence, rejoices in hope, and exultingly exclaims, "Yes, it is all true. All the evidences of Christianity sustain my hope of heaven." To all the suggestions of unbelief—to all the logic of scepticism—to all the difficulties of imagination—to all the surmises of his own misgiving fears, he opposes the testimony of God. He knows what man can say against it; but he also knows what God has said for it. He has studied the historic evidences of the gospel; and if not, he has in the power of the gospel in his own heart, the inward witness in himself. He can stake his soul upon the gospel testimony for eternity. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day."

2. He understands, believes, and approves its true nature. Heaven with him is not a mere name—an intelligible sound—an undefinable thing. He has learnt from his own experience what kind of heaven he wants, and from the Bible what heaven God has provided for him. There is much that God has not revealed—much that he could not reveal—much that if revealed, we could no more understand, than a babe of a year old could comprehend Raphael's picture of the Transfiguration if it were shewn

him, or Handel's Messiah if it were performed in his hearing. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." No, we cannot know it. We must have some other faculties, or else those we already possess must be otherwise than they are to understand it. It is too great to be made known. We must trust God for our hereafter, as we trust him for our present state. And we may trust him. He has undertaken to provide for our perfect bliss, and we may be sure he will do nothing unworthy of himself.

"The glories that compose his name,
Stand all engaged to make us blest."

He treats us as parents sometimes do their children, who promise them some good thing, and require them to trust their wisdom and goodness not to disappoint them. It is beautifully said, God hath "prepared for his people a city, wherefore he is not ashamed to be called their God." Wonderful implication! It shall be something worthy not of their acceptance merely, but of his bestowment. A prince would be ashamed of a present suitable for a peasant. God would be ashamed to bestow a heaven less than that which became himself. With such an assurance, we may be content to walk by faith amidst much ignorance. Our hope will never make us ashamed. It will not utterly fail us, and will not fall below our expectation. When the Queen of Sheba saw Solomon's glory, she almost fainted under the display, and exclaimed, "The half had not been told me." We shall say the same when the veil shall be drawn aside, and eternal glory blaze out before us. Or rather shall say, the millionth part had not been, could not be, made known.

But heaven is not *all* unknown. Something *is* revealed. We can here only refer to, without stopping to explain,

certain passages of Scripture which describe it, and give the substance of them. It will consist of the moral perfection of the soul—its perfect knowledge—1 Cor. xiii, 12 : perfect holiness—Ephes. v, 27 : perfect love—1 John iv, 17 : perfect likeness to Christ—1 John iii, 2. The physical perfection of the body in incorruptibility, immortality, glory, and spirituality.—1 Cor. xv. 42-44. The presence of God in the full manifestation of his glory.—Rev. xxii, 4. The beatific vision of Christ.—John xvii, 24. 1 Thess. iv, 17, 18. The society of angels and all the redeemed.—Heb. xii, 22-24. The joint worship of the heavenly hosts. Rev. iv, 5. The perfect service of Christ, without interruption, imperfection, or cessation.—Rev. xxii, 3. Complete freedom from pain, toil, hunger, thirst, anxiety, fear, sorrow, and death.—Rev. vii, 15-17. xxi, 4. Such are the substantials of heavenly felicity. Take any one of them by itself, and *each* is a heaven. Add them altogether, and what a heaven ! How pure, how elevated, how felicitous ! The description of heaven, as given us in the New Testament, is one of the most striking and convincing internal evidences of the Divine origin of the Word of God. How unlike the Elysium of the Romans, or the Paradise of the Mohammedans, or the Eden of the Swedenborgians, which in fact are but earth transferred to the skies. Here all is unearthly, divine, god-like. It is such as the corrupt heart and imagination of man never would or could have devised. It may be truly said, this New Jerusalem must have descended from heaven. Man never would or could have conceived of such a heaven as that which the Bible makes known. But even of this how little can we now understand ? How faint and feeble are our conceptions of these things. To believe them is nearly all we can do, and wait for their meaning hereafter. Now it is the province of

faith to believe in *this* heaven—the heaven of the Bible—the heaven that God has promised and provided : to believe in this—just this—all this, and nothing more. It confines itself to the testimony ; it does not speculate, but takes the matter just as it is revealed.

3. The Christian believes in the possession of this heaven, so far as relates to the soul, immediately after death. There is a great mystery, no doubt, concerning the intermediate state of the redeemed between death and the resurrection. The condition of disembodied spirits is a subject which neither the profoundest philosophy nor theology can comprehend, or even discuss. Nor is this at all surprising, when we consider how little we can understand of the very nature of spirits as distinct from matter, or the link by which they are united. We may therefore be well content to be in ignorance of their separate state, and it is no part of the business of faith to explain the mystery. It *believes*, but does not *know*. It receives the fact, without presuming it understands all about it. The pious dead are with Jesus. Paul desired to depart and be with Christ, evidently importing that he should be with him when and as soon as he departed. He speaks of our “being absent from the body and present with the Lord ;” but upon the supposition of the soul’s sleeping with the body in the grave till the resurrection, there is no absence from the body. The Christian often adopts the words of our poets,

“ In vain my fancy strives to paint
The moment after death ;
The glories that surround the saint
When he resigns his breath.”

“ Oh, the hour when this material
Shall have vanished like a cloud ;
When amid the wide ethereal,
All the invisible shall crowd ;

“And the naked soul, surrounded
With realities unknown,
Triumph in the view unbounded
Feel herself with God alone.

“In that sudden, strange transition,
By what new and finer sense,
Shall she grasp the mighty vision,
And receive its influence?”

4. It is the part of faith to regard the grace of God, in bestowing heaven, the very same grace as is displayed through the mediation of our Lord Jesus. No cross, no crown, is a phrase susceptible of a double meaning. It may refer to the experience of the Christian himself, and signify that he must for Christ's sake be content to bear a cross on earth if he would wear a crown in heaven. But it may be also applied to Christ, without whose cross we had received no crown. The believer neither asks, expects, nor hardly wishes, a heaven which is not obtained for him by Christ. Every thing Christ was and did for us as a Saviour, has a reference to heaven. It is beautiful to see how Dr. Manton applies the whole of Christ's different states to the procuration of our heavenly felicity. His coming from heaven was to show it to us; his going again there was to prepare a place for us; his sitting at the right hand of God is to promote our interest in heaven; his coming to judgment is to take us back with him to it. Christ in his humiliation was appalled with our flesh, that we in our exaltation might be clothed with his glory. If he was crucified, it was that we might be crowned; and his grave was the way to our throne. In his exaltation he is not only carrying on his intercession, but wielding his sceptre of power, to bring us, as the Captain of our Salvation, to glory. There the saints in glory are represented as gathering round the throne of the Lamb—

worshipping the Lamb—and ascribing their salvation to the blood of the Lamb. This is their anthem, when surrounded with all the glories of the city founded upon precious stones and paved with gold, “*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood.*”

5. Nor does the faith of the Christian leave out the necessary meetness for heaven, accomplished in and by the work of the Holy Spirit. For every state, and for all circumstances in which man is placed, whether it is a condition of duty or of enjoyment, there must be an appropriate preparation. The apostle’s language shews that this is as true in reference to heaven as to anything else, “Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us *meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”—Col. i, 12. This meetness is as necessary as the title. A clown just taken from the plough would not be meet for the splendour of a court. He would enjoy no happiness in such a situation, but find it only a splendid prison, and he would pine amidst the blaze of royalty for the rude and humble scenes of his hamlet and his cottage. As little could the great bulk of mankind be happy in their present state of mind amidst the honours and felicities of the celestial world. Heaven is a state of service as well as of bliss—for there “his servants shall serve him :” and we are taught to pray that “God’s will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven.” It is the combination of obedience and enjoyment ; for the former there must be the preparation of a devoted heart, and for the latter of a spiritual taste. But what devotedness to Christ, or what taste for *his* delights, have the multitude around us ? In heaven they would be as strangers and aliens ; among a people whose language they could not talk, all whose customs were

strange to them, and with whose enjoyments they could hold no sympathy. Or to change the illustration, they would be like men in a fever amidst the viands of a feast—they could do nothing—taste nothing—enjoy nothing. There must be an education—a discipline—a probation—a preparation for Paradise, or it could be no Paradise at all. This meetness must be acquired upon earth, or it never will be acquired anywhere. Without pardon, a sinner would be the more miserable the nearer he was brought to the throne of an offended God; and without holiness he would feel an indescribable irksomeness in that state where there is nothing but what is holy. And where are pardon and holiness acquired but on earth?

The believer realises this fact, and as long and as much as he acts in character, he is seeking by the work of God's Spirit upon his soul to gain this meetness. He feels that he is educating for heaven; and labours that the means of grace, the dispensations of Providence, and his own hope of eternal life, may prepare him for the glory to be revealed. He believes in the fact of different measures of reward and punishment in another world; and that the higher degrees of grace fit him for the higher degrees of glory. Heaven is a state of order, arrangement, and gradation; and the higher posts of service will be there awarded to those who by diligent spiritual cultivation have prepared for them upon earth. A holy ambition for large service in the celestial state is one of the legitimate exercises of faith. A right-minded Christian would do much for Christ here, that he might do proportionately for him hereafter. Perhaps this may constitute the differences in glory—the various degrees of rank and elevation in the heavenly city. This is the believer's business then on earth, to be ever educating for his Father's house and home under the

influence of the Divine Spirit. How delightful an aspect does this give to this world as the high school for heaven. What a dignity does it impart to man amidst all his seeming littleness—he is a student for immortality. What an air of importance does it throw over the seeming trivialities of human life—they furnish the lessons of holiness, patience, and benevolence, which the Christian is learning for the formation of his eternal character. What an incentive does it supply to his diligence, self-denial, and perseverance: he is contending for some post of honour and glory in the kingdom of his Father.

6. We have partly anticipated what comes next; and that is, faith realises the believer's own personal interest in it. It is a glory for *him*. It is not a vast domain which is to enrich some other heir, at which he may look with admiration of its magnificence, and with congratulation to the happy individual who is to call it all his own. It is *his*. He *himself* is the heir of all this vast estate. It is for the righteous and he is one of the number. He is not satisfied merely with singing,

“When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes;”

for he gains a clear evidence of his title. He has the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. He could not let a matter of such infinite moment, as whether he is going on to heaven or hell, remain uncertain. He has gone down into the depths of his own soul with the Word of God in his hand, and examined his state by a comparison of the one with the other, and by the aid of his own consciousness, has come to the conclusion that it safe with him for eternity. He sees there the *work*

of the Spirit in the soul, tallying with the *word* of the Spirit in the Bible; and he says, "Yes, I, this individual self,—this poor, sinful, yet renewed creature; I, who now am so little thought of by others, and still less thought of by myself; I, who am so soon to die, be buried, and forgotten, *I*, am to inherit glory everlasting. The *I AM* a child of God *now*, is to be the everlasting *I am* in heaven. *I* am to be one of 'the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven!' *I* am to be one of 'the spirits of just men made perfect.' The greater the glory, the more miserable I should be if I had not a well-founded persuasion it would be mine."

7. The Christian is favoured with a foretaste of its bliss even on earth. What a mystery, as we have said, is heaven to the multitude. Talk to them of the enjoyments of heaven upon earth, and you would appear to them as one that dreameth. Yet is it absolutely certain that heaven in its commencement is known upon earth; and to use the beautiful language of Lady Powerscourt, "a Christian should be not one who looks up from earth to heaven, but one who looks down from heaven upon earth. His conversation (citizenship) is in heaven. He *is* an immortal, and should have the air, the consciousness, and the feeling of one. *He* knows what heaven means, for he feels it. Faith gives it to him in earnest and foretaste now. The very belief of such a state is its beginning. Is it not so with *all* our future joys? Who that looks forward to some promised and expected joy, does not in the very anticipation, commence the reality? What thoughts and imaginations are awakened! The soul throws itself forward into the very midst of the expected delight. Its hopes out-travel itself, and are already there before it takes full possession. Dr. Watts has truly said,

“The men of grace have found
 Glory begun below;
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground,
 From faith and hope may grow.”

Or if they do not grow on earthly ground, then like the spies which went into Canaan and brought back the grapes of Eshcol, faith and hope go up into heaven, and plucking off some of the fruits of the tree of life, bring them down to the believer upon earth. The contemplation of heaven is like the sight of a feast to a hungry appetite—the first relish of it. Just think what these graces do for their possessor; what a sense of peace with God and of his love to us; what a feeling of love to *him*; what a quietness of conscience; what an admiration of the glory of Christ, with an intense sense of gratitude and affection to him; what a consciousness of the power of holiness and its unspeakable enjoyment; what a complacency in God’s people, and what a benevolence to all God’s creatures; what a stillness of the passions, and a regularity of the affections; what an elevation above the low cares and pursuits of the world; how independent is the soul for happiness of all the possessions of this world; how seemingly rich in all the materials of true felicity; how free from all the agitations of this tumultuous scene of things; how near to God, the fountain of life, when really and powerfully under the influence of faith. And what is heaven as to its great essentials—its eternal felicities—its unfading delights, but feelings such as these? Here then, if there be a heaven at all, ~~is its bud.~~ Can we imagine—can we wish for—a heaven higher, purer, sweeter than the absolute perfection of such a state of mind as this? Let any rational mind, any renewed heart, yield itself up to the full enjoyment by an intelligent faith, of the truths of God’s precious Bible,—let him thus plunge into the depths of

God's glorious nature, Christ's wondrous work, and the revelations of the unseen world, and can he be ignorant of what heaven is? If we know nothing of heaven, it is because we know nothing of our Bibles; and if we feel nothing of it, it is because we have not a stronger faith in them. God has set the door of glory ajar, and in part thrown up its windows, in the Bible, that we may look in and see; and has sent out by the hand of the sacred writers some small portions of the celestial feast, that we may taste and long to go in and partake fully of the celestial banquet.

And now what influence should this faith have upon us in reference to the heavenly state?

Should it not raise our *meditations* upon it? If worldly men in the state of their minority look onward with such delight to their coming of age, when the title, and the mansion, and the domain, shall all be theirs—when their honours, their riches, and their enjoyment shall be ripe, gathered, and feasted upon; shall we, who are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—who are expecting an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away—be forgetful of ours? With heaven expanding its glories above us—giving us the beginning of them within us—and spreading them out in eternal perspective before us, shall we be so taken up with the low, terrene, and dusky objects of this world, as to turn aside and not see this great sight? Shall we be pleased with ~~tapers~~ while the glorious sun is blazing above us, and pouring a flood of radiance over the earth, and covering the face of nature with smiles? Shall the pictures of children engross and amuse our attention, when the snow-clad mountains—and the great ocean—and the boundless prospect of river, wood, and valley, are spread out before us? Or to go back again to the

case of the minor, shall the mind of the young prince be so taken up with the sports of youth, and the allowance of his pupilage, as to forget the regalia, the honours, and the gratifications of royalty, which are just before him? All this is rational compared with that strange oblivion of heavenly glory which characterises the conduct of the professing Christian. O man, renounce the hope of heaven, or think more about it. Be consistent, and if heaven be so low in your esteem as not to be deemed worth thinking about, give up the faith of it.

Let the expectation of heaven be *fruitful of consolation*. If it be believed it must be so. Is it such a trifle that the expectation of it should have no effect in moderating our grief amidst the troubles of life? What said the apostle, when speaking of this glorious inheritance, "Wherein ye *greatly rejoice*, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."—1 Peter i, 6. Why, if all the trials of all the men on earth could by possibility be cast into one of the scales of any individual's lot, and heaven placed in the other, even in reference to this accumulation of woe, the apostle's words would be true, where he says, "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The first *view* of heaven when we reach it, will in a moment cause us to forget all the trials of earth: and the first *thought* of heaven *now*, should have the same effect in *measure*. Christian, why weepest thou? Look up—heaven is smiling above you. Look on—heaven is opening before you. Let your tears, if they must fall, be as the drops of rain which fall in the sunshine and reflect the colours of the rainbow. The last tear of earth will soon be wiped away amidst the first smile of heaven; and that smile will be eternal.

Let us in the exercise of faith, be content with our remaining ignorance of the celestial state. We have already said there are many things of which we necessarily *must* be ignorant. Much as we do know, there is more we do not know. There is a curiosity in us all to know as much as we can about the vast, mysterious, eternal future. Over that future hangs a thick, impenetrable veil—oh that it were altogether drawn aside—or only a little way; or if not altogether transparent as glass, yet that it were semi-diaphanous. No; nothing more than what the Scripture hath said can be told us. Is it not enough? Can we trust God for nothing? Would we walk to heaven by sight? No, we must wait and be contented. We are sure when the curtain is drawn up, instead of querulously asking in the language and tone of disappointment, “*IS THIS ALL!*” we shall exclaim, I repeat, with delighted surprise as did the Queen of Sheba when she stood before Solomon, “*The half had not been told me.*” Since God has promised us a heaven worthy of himself to bestow, we should be contented in shades far deeper than those amidst which we dwell, assured that we shall never be ashamed of our hope. Without a single star to relieve the darkness of the night, we could wait for the rising of the sun, how much more so with the firmament over our head, studded with constellations of promise and description.

Out of faith comes *patience* also,—that calm and quiet grace—that serene and waiting state of mind. It is true that the greatness of an expected and delayed blessing is of itself too apt to produce impatience; yet when that blessing is certain, the mind on the other hand can control its eagerness by the assurance that it will come, and that its greatness will infinitely compensate for any little delay. As regards the great bulk of professors, we have

no need to speak of *patience* to them. *Their* danger lies in the opposite extreme of a too great eagerness to remain : but think of such a Christian as I have at this moment before my mind's eye ; one who in early life was living in great respectability of circumstances, but is now more than fourscore years of age—suffering constant pain, and sometimes extreme anguish—dependant upon charity not only for comforts, but necessities—often apparently on the verge of death, and then sent back again to more suffering, like a vessel just entering the haven, and then driven out to sea again. What need of patience is there *here* ? To groan, and weep, and agonize at the very door of heaven ; and that door not open year after year to the poor sufferer. Yet even in such a case, how powerful is the thought, “Heaven is worth waiting for ever so long, even in my melancholy circumstances.” The night is long, and dark, and stormy, but the morning must come—and O, what a sunrise will it be !

What is so powerful *to overcome the fear of death* as the promise and the prospect of eternal glory ? Why, why, O Christian, tremble at the thought of dying ? What is it to him who hath faith in Christ but a dark passage to the regions of immortality—to the realms of ineffable light and glory ? Beyond that dark valley lies “the inheritance of the saints in light.” And can you not enter with boldness the gloomy defile for the sake of the sunny plains beyond, especially when you are to be accompanied through it by him who brought life and immortality to light ? Cleombrutus, a Pagan, on hearing Plato discourse of the immortality of the soul, ran and leaped into the sea, that he might immediately be in that blessed state. Cicero represents Cato as saying, “If God should grant me to become a child again, to send forth a second time my infant

will from my cradle, and having even run out my course, to begin it again, I should ~~most~~ earnestly refuse it, for what profit hath this life? and how much toil—yet I do not repent that I have lived, because I hope that I have not lived in vain. And now I go out of ~~this~~ life, not as out of my dwelling-house, but from my inn. O blessed day! when I shall enter that council and assembly of souls, and depart from this rude and disorderly rout and row.” Shall a heathen have such longing desires after future glory, though only possessing such faint evidence of its reality, and such ignorance of its nature, as to commit suicide to reach it, and you, with all the light of revelation shining upon the subject, be unwilling to go when God calls you to it? The Christian’s unwillingness to die is the taunt and stumbling-block of infidels. May it be overcome in us!

Christians, I now in conclusion solemnly call upon you to consider your heavenly calling. Consider the end and purpose of your redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. He was sent from heaven to tell you of that glorious state,—to open a way for you to enter it—to show you in his own person, and to assist you by your own experience, to see and feel how much of heaven may be enjoyed on earth, and then to conduct you thither. And lo! now the God of all grace is calling you by Jesus Christ unto his eternal glory. It is your calling to forsake this world and mind the other. Make haste then to quit yourselves of your entanglements of all earthly dispositions and affections. Learn to live in this world as those who are not of it. Consider *futurity* is the greatness of man, and the glorious hereafter is the grand scene for the attainment of the fulness of your existence. “O get then the lovely image of the future glory into your minds. Keep it ever before your eyes.

Make it familiar to your thoughts. Imprint daily there these words, I shall behold thy face, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness. And see that your souls be enriched with that righteousness, have inwrought into them that holy rectitude, that may dispose them to that blessed state. Then will you die with your own consent, and go away, not driven, but allured and drawn. You will go, as the redeemed of the Lord, with everlasting joy upon their heads: as those that know whither you go, even to a state infinitely worthy of your desires and choice, and where it is best for you to be. You will part with your souls, not by a forcible separation, but a joyful surrender and resignation. They will dislodge from this earthly tabernacle, rather as putting it off than having it rent and torn away. Loosen yourselves from this body by degrees, as we do any thing we would remove from a place where it sticks fast. Gather up your spirits into themselves. Teach them to look upon themselves as a distinct thing. Inure them to the thoughts of a dissolution. Be continually as taking leave. Cross and disprove the common maxim, and let your hearts, which they use to say are wont to die last, die first. Prevent death, and be mortified towards every earthly thing beforehand, that death may have nothing to kill but your body; and that you may not die a double death in one hour, and suffer the death of your body and of your love to it both at once. Much less that this should survive to your greater, and even incurable misery. Shake off your bands and fetters, the terrene affections that so closely confine you to the house of your bondage. And lift up your heads in expectation of the approaching jubilee, the day of your redemption; when you are to go out free, and enter into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; when you shall serve,

and groan, and complain no longer. Let it be your continual song, and the matter of your daily praise, that the time of your happy deliverance is hastening on; that ere long you shall be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. That he hath not doomed you to an everlasting imprisonment within those close and clayey walls, wherein you have been so long shut up from the beholding of his sight and glory. In the thoughts of this, while the outward man is sensibly perishing, let the inward revive and be renewed day by day. 'What prisoner would be sorry to see the walls of his prison house (so a heathen speaks) mouldering down, and the hopes arriving to him of being delivered out of that darkness that had buried him, of recovering his liberty, and enjoying the free air and light. What champion inured to hardship, would stick to throw off rotten rags, and rather expose a naked, placid, free body, to naked, placid, free air? The truly generous soul (so he a little above) 'never leaves the body against its will.' Rejoice that it is the gracious pleasure of thy good God, thou shalt not always inhabit a dungeon, nor lie amidst so impure and disconsolate darkness? that he will shortly exchange thy filthy garments for those of salvation and praise. The end approaches. As you turn over these leaves, so are your days turned over. And as you are now arrived to the end of this book, God will shortly write *finis* to the book of your life on earth, and shew you your names written in heaven, in the book of that life which shall never end."*

* Howe's "Blessedness of the Righteous."

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